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D'ARCY McGEE'S IRISH PUB

Daryl Marritt has gone to great lengths to relieve himself of nearly $50,000 of debt
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Syria on the screen

CINEMA

Toronto film fest fighting stereotypes through art

Gilbert Ngabo
Metro | Toronto

The inaugural Syrian Film Festival is about much more than movies.

Organizers hope it can fight stereotypes that are springing from the refugee crisis, taking people deeper inside the country's culture.

The lead-up to the festival has proven that hostile attitudes toward refugees definitely exist, said Adam Riggio, the festival's communications co-ordinator.

Discriminatory comments have been posted on the festival's social-media platforms, he said, portraying refugees as terrorists and "parasites" to Canada's immigration and social-service systems.

"Those are all imbecilic, moronic, racist lies. I can't put it any other way," said Riggio.

"It burns me so much to see those racist comments. It angers me that I share my country with people who feel this way."

Telling the real stories of Syria through films will help dispel those misconceptions, he said.

The festival, starting Friday at the Art Gallery of Ontario, has a lineup of eight films — a mix of features, shorts, documentaries and one animation.

All were created by Syrian filmmakers.

OPENING
NOT WHO WE ARE
A feature film about the strength and resilience of five Syrian women as they struggle with refugee experiences.

OPENING
QUEENS OF SYRIA
A feature portraying 50 Syrian women who are exiled in Jordan. They've organized to perform their own version of The Trojan Women, an ancient Greek drama by Euripides.

Some of the films document life in refugee camps, while others examine the way the world is intervening in the crisis.

"That region is literally on fire right now," said Riggio. "We hope the power of imagery and cinema help people sympathize more with other human beings who are fleeing from what I personally consider the third world war."

If you go

The Syrian Film Festival runs through Sunday at the AGO's Jackman Hall.

WHAT DOES PROGRESS LOOK LIKE?

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New York's 'Map the Homeless' app blurs ethical lines. **Business**

Garbage and recycling bins at Spadina Road, north of Bloor Street. **The city says that 68 per cent of waste from single-family homes is diverted from landfills.** Inset: When it comes to recycling, people living in Toronto towers are lagging behind. **Only about a third of waste in rental units and condos is properly sorted**, a problem the city and environmentalists are trying to tackle.
RICHARD LAUTENS/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE; INSET: TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

Tower residents worst sorters

ENVIRONMENT

City's landfill in London will reach capacity by 2029

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Highrises. Low recycling rates.

Single-family homes are diverting 68 per cent of their garbage from the landfill, compared to only 29 per cent for those who live in rental or condo towers, according to the city.

If the trend continues, Toronto's landfill, located outside of London, Ont., will reach capacity by 2029, said Rob Orpin, the city's acting deputy manager of solid waste management.

Expanding the landfill could take years and cost millions, he said.

The city will be looking for ways to encourage tower dwellers to change their trash habits as it revamps its solid waste strategy in the new year, Orpin said. Possible solutions range from increased outreach to making it more expensive to throw out organic or recyclable material.

"There's no ownership of the material when you're in a condo," Orpin said. "But as somebody who lives in a single-family home, I'm doing the diversion because I'm paying based on the size of the garbage bin."

> **Multi-residential buildings just recycle a lot less than single family homes.**
> Emily Alfred

Another barrier to better recycling in highrises is infrastructure. Although new buildings are required to have modern sorting systems, older towers have a single garbage chute, making recycling and composting more labour-intensive.

There are some success stories in the city, including Mayfair on the Green in northern Scarborough. The 283-unit building has managed to divert 80 per cent of its waste.

"It's the poster child for proper diversion" in Toronto, Orpin said.

The building's garbage chute is reserved for organic waste. Residents drop off recycling and garbage downstairs, where they can also recycle e-waste, cooking oil and other hazardous materials.

"They cut their annual waste fees from over $15,000 to something like $1,000 this year," said Emily Alfred with the Toronto Environmental Alliance.

The alliance is calling on the city to boost the recycling education it offers to tower residents. The group is also circulating a petition asking city councillors to commit to diverting 85 per cent of local waste.

"If the city was serious about recycling in apartments, they'd double their outreach staff," Alfred said. "It's a lot cheaper than getting a new landfill or building an expensive incinerator."

That may be difficult, however, as the solid waste department is looking to trim its communication budget by $300,000 next year.

"We're still confident we can get our message out next year with the budget we have," Orpin said.

Minister says no to letting jets fly out of island airport

TRANSPORTATION

Airline CEO says studies should be looked at first

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Canada's new transportation minister says he won't allow jets to fly from the island airport.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The question of whether Porter Airlines will be allowed to fly jets out of Toronto's island airport has been settled.

At 9 p.m. Thursday evening, Transport Minister Marc Garneau announced, on Twitter, that he's been learning about the issue and has come to a conclusion: no jets.

"I confirm that GoC position is same as LPC commitment: we will not re-open tripartite agreement for YTZ," he tweeted.

That agreement currently does not allow jets to be flown from the island airport and, if Porter's plans to fly jets from Billy Bishop were to be successful, the federal government would have had to agree to renegotiate it.

Earlier in the week, a spokesperson for Garneau had told the Financial Post the newly minted minister had yet to make up his mind on the issue.

"He's deliberating, he's consulting with officials, he's getting facts, and when he's done that he'll have something to announce," Jean Proulx told the Post.

Earlier Thursday, before the minister's decision was known, Porter CEO Robert Deluce said he was encouraged to hear Garneau was reviewing the file.

"We'll be happy to provide him with any information he might find useful," he said.

According to Deluce, an environmental assessment and other studies ordered by the city last year concerning the airport are nearly complete and should inform the decision.

"It's premature for anyone to say 'no' without having the information that would help them make a rational decision," he said.

BOMBARDIER

The federal government is still debating extending financial aid to Bombardier. Porter CEO Robert Deluce said Thursday the status of the island airport expansion could be a factor in Ottawa's decision.

Porter has a conditional agreement to buy the necessary jets from the struggling manufacturer.

"That (would go) a long way to helping Bombardier to be financial sustainable in the long run," Deluce said. "It's an important political decision."

NoJetsTO said the future of Toronto's waterfront was the real issue at stake. If Porter wants to fly jets, they're welcome to do so out of Pearson, NoJetsTO spokesman Tim Ehlich said.

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PERMITS

Artists could be exempt from fees

Gilbert Ngabo
Metro | Toronto

Small-scale artists and musicians may soon get a break on the cost of staging events in some public parks.

The city is considering a number of measures that would make them exempt from paying the fee required to use the spaces for performances and exhibits.

It's part of the Arts in the Parks program, launched recently to bring more culture to public spaces.

Along with waiving the permit fee — which varies depending on the size of an event — the measures would reduce the wait time for permits from eight weeks to about one week.

"It will help the artists reach a wider audience, allowing people to enjoy art and music more," said Jake Tobin Garrett, part of Toronto's Park People alliance. "Not everyone in the community goes to an art gallery or a bar to watch a band perform, because it costs money."

The plan also aims to increase the number of artists performing in parks outside the downtown core, he said.

CHARITY

Pegasus project to set up pop-up shop

Thrift shoppers can check out something new this weekend.

A Toronto charity, known as Pegasus Community Project, is gearing up for its first pop-up shop. The charity helps adults with disabilities develop the skills they need to be self-sufficient. Working in a thrift shop is one of the programs that helps people toward that goal. Sunday's pop-up will include items ranging from vintage clothing to vintage teacups. It's being staged in an apartment across the street from the charity's main store at 931 Kingston Rd.

All proceeds will go back to the organization.

MALLORY CHATE/FOR METRO

IN BRIEF

Possible link in stabbing and killing of spa owner

Peel police say they are trying to determine if there is a link between the killing of a spa owner earlier this year and a stabbing she survived late last year.

They say Ming-Chien Hsin was stabbed at her home last November. Her son, who was visiting at the time, made the call to 911.

Police say he was also the one to report her missing in April. Her body was found inside a black car in Mississauga a week later.

Her 25-year-old son, Eric Lu, was charged Wednesday with first-degree murder in her death.

Mark Dookhram, 21, and Justine Ordonio, 25, were charged with the same offence earlier this week.

Investigators would not comment on motive or how the three knew each other, saying the case is before the courts.

But they said Ordonio was previously known to police.

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Oscar Wood became a social media sensation after his dad posted a video of him swinging along with Blue Jays outfielderJose Bautista during his series-clinching home run against the Texas Rangers in Game 5 of the 2015 ALDS. CONTRIBUTED

Mini Bautista up for 2 MLB awards

SPORTS

Winning would top off memorable season for fan

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Mini Bautista, the young Toronto Blue Jays fan who's become a sensation, is up for two big honours.

Nine-year-old Oscar Wood, known for painting on a beard and batting in sync with Jose Bautista at games, has been nominated for best social media post and best player-fan interaction in the Esurance 2015 MLB Awards.

"He thinks it's really cool," his father Benn said via Twitter. "I told him they're like the Oscars for the baseball season. Very apt: Oscar up for two Oscars."

In the Jays' biggest game of the season, Wood was swinging in time with Bautista when he connected for an ALDS-winning home run. The video Wood's dad posted on Twitter became an overnight sensation.

The clip has been viewed and retweeted thousands of times and turned into gifs that have been shared across the Internet.

"If he doesn't win, it's still the best season ever for him," Wood said about his son. "If he does win, it's another lap on the awesome roller-coaster that this season has been for him."

The experience has left Oscar with more confidence — encouraging him to have fun, regardless of what others may think.

"I'm so pleased with the fans, the team, the feel of this sport. We have the best days out as a family doing this," Benn Wood said.

Both Benn and Oscar are hoping the Jays do well in the awards too. They want to see Kevin "Superman" Pillar win best defense and Bautista win best offence for that epic home run.

Nominations

Oscar Wood is up for two awards at the Esurance MLB Awards. He's been nominated for best social media post, and best player-fan interaction.

> **He thinks it's really cool. I told him they're like the Oscars for the baseball season. Very apt: Oscar up for two Oscars.**
> Benn Wood, Mini Bautista's father

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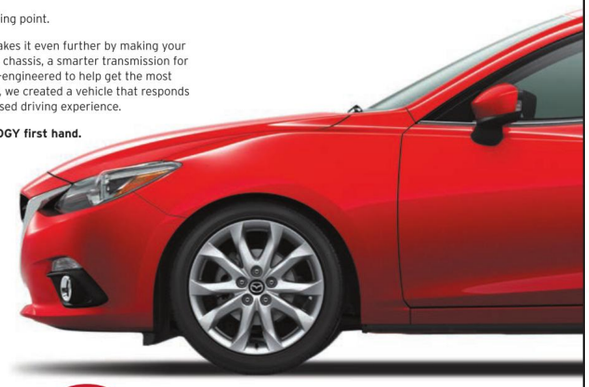

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Chief Mark Saunders attends a Toronto Police Services Board meeting at the Toronto Police Service headquarters on College Street on Thursday. MELISSA RENWICK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Police board backs $27M budget hike

TPS

Spending projected to exceed $1B

The Toronto Police Services Board has unanimously approved the force's request for a $27-million increase over the 2015 net approved budget.

The 2.76 per cent increase, if approved by city council, will push the service's 2016 operating budget to more than $1 billion and was primarily needed to cover the wage settlement included in the most recent collective agreement.

Earlier this year, the board and the Toronto Police Association signed a four-year contract providing a 2.75 wage hike this year, 1.95 per cent next year, 1.9 per cent in 2017 and 1.75 in 2018.

Almost 90 per cent of the budget goes to salaries and benefits.

Mayor John Tory said he, his fellow board members and Chief Mark Saunders are committed to finding ways to constrain police spending in the future. A $200,000 KPMG report with cost-cutting recommendations is on next month's board agenda, he said.

"We can't continue to see significant increases in the police budget indefinitely, so we're at work on that," Tory told reporters after the board's monthly meeting at police headquarters.

Tory said the collective agreement allows for discussions on shift scheduling and the requirement there be two officers in a car after dark, which are embedded in the police contract. Both would be contentious issues over which the TPA has in the past vigorously opposed changes.

A 2011 Ernst & Young efficiency report found that $35 million could be cut from the police budget with a simple shift schedule change. Right now, there are as many officers on duty at 4 a.m. as there are at 7 p.m.

"It's a crazy way to spend money," said former Toronto mayor John Sewell, who heads a police watchdog group.

Sewell was representing himself when he told the board Thursday the proposed increase is $65 million more than the city wanted to spend next year on the service.

The city had asked for a police budget one per cent less than the 2015 budget, or $942 million. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

TORONTO ZOO

White lion cubs growing quickly

Panda cubs, watch out! There's a new troop of white lion cubs taking over at the Toronto Zoo and the Internet's daily dose of cuteness.

Around a month ago, the four white lion cubs could hardly open their eyes but are now curiously springing and stumbling toward their new toys as seen from a video update from the Toronto Zoo.

"Now weighing between 13 to 14 pounds, they have become quite fuzzy," says the Toronto Zoo.

Their activities range from playing with their toys and following mom around in the maternity den.

Four rare white lion cubs in a video update. COURTESY TORONTO ZOO

Makali, the four-year-old rare white lion at the Toronto Zoo, gave birth to two cubs on Sept. 26 and another two on Sept. 27.

The female lion was showing signs of late pregnancy in mid-September, when she was closely monitored 24 hours by staff. After the birth of the four cubs weighing only 1.3 kilograms each, Makali and her cubs were tucked away from the public's gaze in the maternity area of the lion habitat.

The lion cubs and mom remain hidden from public view, but the Toronto Zoo's Twitter will have constant updates on the cubs' growth until they are strong enough to be released from the maternity den. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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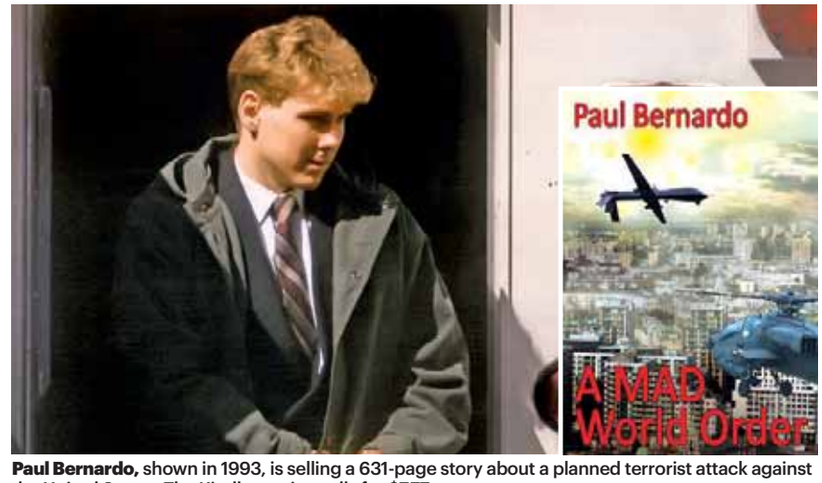


Paul Bernardo, shown in 1993, is selling a 631-page story about a planned terrorist attack against the United States. The Kindle version sells for $7.77. KEITH BEATY/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Bernardo selling e-book online

SERIAL KILLER

Scarborough rapist's novel as graphic as his murders

Paul Bernardo, Canada's most notorious serial killer, is selling an e-novel on Amazon.com while serving a life sentence for the sex slayings of schoolgirls Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy.

A MAD World Order is a 631-page book about the "top echelons" of the Russian government planning a catastrophic strike against the U.S. in a bid to regain superpower status.

A Kindle version of the book sells for $7.77. Amazon says writers can use its Kindle Direct Publishing to get a book on Kindle stores worldwide within 24 to 48 hours. Writers can earn "up to 70 per cent royalties" on sales to customers in countries including Canada, the U.S., the U.K. and Japan.

Tony Bryant, Bernardo's lawyer, told Global News in an email: "I am advised that Mr. Bernardo has written a book."

Global quoted an excerpt about Al Qaeda "martyrs" committing suicide after a terrorist attack. "Flattened on impact the bullet tips tore through the interiors pushing their brains along with it...," it reads. "Both bodies slumped forward revealing the blood droplets, hair and chunks of grey matter oozing down the sheet from the two impact stains."

Bernardo is in solitary confinement in Millhaven Institution in Bath, Ont. Convicted 20 years ago of murdering French and Mahaffy, he was sentenced to life in prison with no hope of parole for 25 years.

> **Amazon is DESPICABLE in selling this 'book' from this monster.**
> Amazon customer review

After learning of Bernardo's e-novel from Toronto News Service, lawyer Tim Danson called it "disturbing, obviously."

"My biggest question is whether the novel directly or indirectly references any of his offences," Danson said. "If not, then there is likely nothing illegal because he is not profiting from his offences. He has a constitutional right to free speech."

Customer reviews on the Amazon website for Bernardo's book criticize the publishing giant for giving a sales platform to a notorious killer. "I will do no further business with Amazon while it allows this scum to profit," states one.

Amazon has not yet responded to inquiries from Torstar News Service.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

FAN FICTION

James Bond gets new spin-off

Mallory Chate
For Metro | Toronto

Everyone knows his name as Bond, James Bond.

But get ready to meet a new one.

A Toronto publishing house has created a spin-off of the agent in a book called Licence Expired: The Unauthorized James Bond.

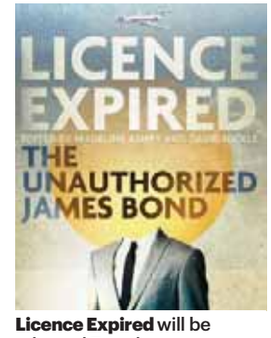
ChiZine jumped on the opportunity when Bond author Ian Flemming's work became public domain in January.

The book is described as a form of fan fiction that expands on the popular character through untold stories, playing off internal themes of the original books.

"It's a compilation of stories of James Bond as he appeared in the books," said co-editor David Nickle.

With 007 hype running high from the release of Spectre, ChiZine is hoping to capitalize on the moment.

Licence Expired is set to launch Tuesday.



Licence Expired will be released Tuesday. CONTRIBUTED

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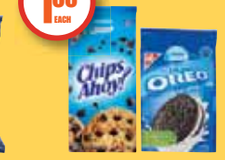

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Extreme debt diet helps man save $95K

MONEY

Man goes from $48K debt into the black in only three years

Daryl Marritt desperately wanted to use his master of education degree to help underprivileged children. But what he needed to do was pay down $48,000 in debt that weighed on his ability to pursue his passion.

A year later, Marritt had accomplished a feat that eludes thousands of other Canadians: he became debt free. He has since managed to save nearly $100,000.

Half a year after he graduated in 2011, Marritt faced a monumental decision. He could accept a dream job as a teacher in Honduras that paid $400 a month, or return to a steady job at a car dealership in Brampton and embark on an aggressive campaign to eliminate his student loans and other debt.

"I was a slave to my debt," the 30-year-old said in an interview Thursday. So Marritt took the full-time job in business development at the Toyota dealership and went on an extreme debt diet.

He negotiated a compensation package that knocked $3,000 off his $48,000 salary, but included a company car.

He sold his own vehicle for $18,000. That paid off a $12,000 car loan. The rest, plus $2,500 more from the sale of his road bike, went toward his student loans. Marritt committed to putting at least $2,000 each month toward debt repayment. If he had more than $1,000 in his bank account at the end of the month, that also went toward his loans.

There were other sacrifices. He took on a low-paying, part-time job. He made a deal to live with his parents where he paid $200 a month in rent plus several hours of handyman work.

"I was up on a ladder cleaning out gutters and any other jobs — rewiring electrical fixtures or whatever I had to do," he said.

Sushi was his one indulgence.

"It was like 'when I feel really frustrated about not going out, I'm going to go out for sushi, I'm not going to hold back'."

Daryl Marritt looks over his financial picture on his tablet using mint.com. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Marritt climbed out of the red in September 2013, a year after setting the ambitious goal. Two years later, he has $95,000 in savings.

He says he is happier that he has stepped off the "hedonistic treadmill" and feels pride in mastering the art of living simply.

He met his wife through The Meeting House, a church with Mennonite roots that emphasizes the importance of frugal living and fostering relationships with people instead of things.

"We value simplicity; we value relationships," Marritt said of his wife, Sarah, who also works at the car dealership.

They married this summer and exchanged wooden rings that cost $400. She made her own dress and guests paid their own way, $200 each, for a weekend stay at a camp in Parry Sound.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

FRUGAL LIVING

1. Learn to live with less: Marritt sold his car and expensive mountain bike and doesn't have much in the way of gadgets.
2. Make sacrifices: Marritt and his wife pay $300 in monthly rent for a room in a home they share with four other adults and six children.
3. DIY: Marritt watches do-it-yourself YouTube videos to learn how to make things around the house.
4. Limit your rewards: Marritt picked one indulgence to keep in his life. For him, it was sushi; for his wife it was daily McDonald's coffees.
5. Buy used: Marritt found someone looking to get out of a cellphone contract on Kijiji and took it over at a discount.
6. Barter/Negotiate: When he lived with his parents, Marritt offered to do more around the house in exchange for a reduced monthly rent of $200.

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Be nice, cabinet told

POLITICS

Trudeau tells ministers to co-operate with everyone

Working well with others — including people in the media — is now officially part of the job description for Canadian cabinet ministers.

The "mandate letters" given to every minister are setting a new bar for co-operation in Justin Trudeau's government, according to one letter obtained in advance of the expected public release.

In fact, if the sheer word volume in these letters is any indication, co-operation seems to be the top item on the to-do list of Trudeau's team.

Ministers are being warned that they will be judged by how well they treat a whole raft of people — everyone from business to labour, stakeholders and citizens, and yes, the opposition and the media too.

"Members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them is essential," the letter states.

This is, we'll remember, a slightly more formal way of saying what Trudeau told a crowd of people booing reporters during the last week of the election campaign. "Hey! We have respect for journalists in this country," Trudeau chided unruly Liberals at a campaign stop in Montreal. "They ask tough questions and they're supposed to. OK?"

One group of people is singled out as well in the mandate letters for special treatment from government. "No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples," the letter states.

The notable feature of these mandate letters, as mentioned, is the amount of words devoted to culture change of the kinder, gentler sort. "Open by default" is an operating principle.

One senior Liberal said this week that the Trudeau team needs to hammer home the instructions about co-operation because they represent a massive shakeup to the status quo, or at least the operating culture of the past decade or so in Ottawa. "A lot of people just aren't used to this; it's totally new," the senior Liberal said.

Former prime minister Stephen Harper gave mandate letters to his ministers too and asked for yearly updates on their priorities. But the letters were never made public, and it's probably safe to bet that they didn't give all these warnings on co-operation, especially not with the media.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau talks to media after holding a meeting with cabinet. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

SYRIAN CRISIS

Refugees screened before, after arrival

Some security screening will be conducted on Canadian soil as the Liberals push to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the year, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale says.

25K

Number of Syrian refugees Canada plans to settle. Quebec will welcome 6,000 of those.

Goodale told reporters that security checks on the refugees will be conducted both before and after the refugees begin arriving in Canada.

"It will be a combination of both," Goodale said after a cabinet meeting Thursday.

Security concerns were among the chief reasons the previous Conservative government advocated for moving slower on the refugee file — although Harper's former chief of defence staff, Rick Hillier, suggested those were overblown.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

NDP entrusts long-time MPs with critic roles

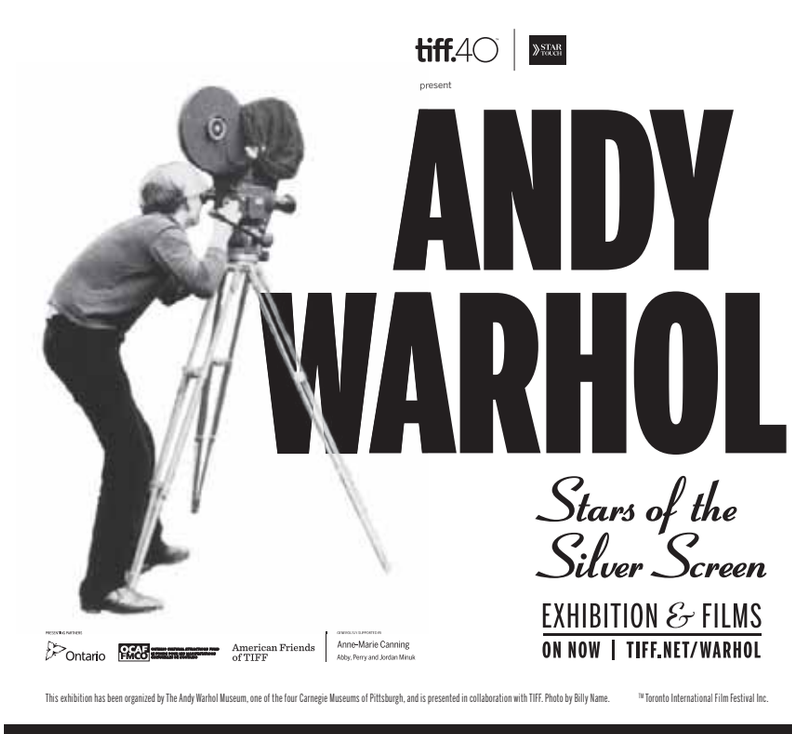
Tom Mulcair will rely on veteran members of his team — like Nathan Cullen, critic for environment — to help the NDP flex its muscles in Parliament. Charlie Angus has been named critic for indigenous affairs, and B.C.'s Don Davies will focus on health.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Posties continue challenge

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers says it will continue with its Federal Court challenge of Canada Post's decision to end home mail delivery. Sylvain Lapointe, a national director of the union for the Montreal area, said the legal challenge, which includes several groups including the disabled and retirees.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



HUMAN RIGHTS

Miss World Canada claims China wants to silence her

Thandi Fletcher
Metro | Vancouver

Soon after she was crowned Miss World Canada in May, Anastasia Lin says her father was threatened by Chinese officials because of her outspoken views on human rights abuses in the communist country.

Now the China-born actress, who went to high school in Vancouver, claims Chinese officials are deliberately withholding her travel visa to prevent her from taking part in the Miss World final, taking place in the Chinese resort city of Sanya on Dec. 19.

"This is not about me going to China for the pageant," Lin, 25, told Metro by phone. "This has been happening to a lot of Chinese people. People are being silenced, and no one has really had a platform to speak out about this issue."

She said she first began to suspect that she was being blocked from taking part in the international beauty pageant when she failed to receive an invitation letter from the Chinese government that she needs in order to apply for a visa. She said other contestants, like Miss Australia and Miss Scotland, had already received their letters by Oct. 30.

Anastasia Lin. CONTRIBUTED

"I'm the only one that I know of who doesn't have this letter," Lin said. "Miss World told me that they are doing everything they can to get this letter for me, but the Chinese just won't budge."

Foreign Affairs said Thursday it could not comment on Lin's case specifically. But spokeswoman Rachna Mishra said the protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign policy and a priority in the country's longstanding relationship with China.

Lin, who made human rights part of her winning bid to become Miss World Canada, believes her public criticism of Beijing's policies may have harmed her chances of taking part in the Miss World pageant.

The actress and model, who also practices Falun Gong, testified before the U.S. Congress in July about religious persecution in China. She also plays an imprisoned practitioner of the outlawed Falun Gong sect in an upcoming Canadian movie.

Lin, who moved to Canada when she was 13, said her father, who still lives in China, told her he was proud of her when she was crowned Miss World Canada in May. But within a couple days, she said his tone changed.

"He sent me a text message a few days after I was crowned telling me that … I must stop my advocacy for human rights in China, otherwise we have to walk separate ways," she said, adding that she believes her father was visited by Chinese security agents who forced him to apply pressure on her.

While she considered holding back from expressing her views initially, Lin said she later decided she needed to speak out to protect her father. If the world is watching, she said she believes Chinese officials will be less likely to continue to pressure him.

Lin said she is hopeful that she will still be allowed to enter China and take part in the pageant.

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Where food, drink meet politics

Ever wondered where politicians and parliamentary staff hang out after a long day of important decision-making and problem solving? Some of Ottawa's many pubs and restaurants are frequented by the likes of federal party leaders and their caucuses — and you may be surprised at how much information is shared over a glass of Chardonnay.

1 He knows just how you like your martini — Xavier McNeill mixes a martini behind the bar at Zoe's Lounge inside the Fairmont Chateau Laurier.

2 An elegant pour for those on the floor — Bartender Elizabeth Gould pours a glass of Sancerre Daniel Chotard inside Luxe Bistro in the ByWard Market.

3 Getting to the pint — From left: Ian McKierahan, Paul Sanderson and Rob MacDonald wind down with some pints at Sir John A Pub on Elgin Street.

POLITICAL BUZZ

Jessica Murphy

One of the first signs of a power change in political Ottawa is the sight of the Liberals creeping back into D'Arcy McGee's.

The venerable Sparks Street bar had been home to a political tussle when Stephen Harper's Conservatives came to power in 2006 and, early on, ousted the Liberals from the favourite watering hole, says photographer Mitch Raphael, who has covered the Ottawa social scene for years.

But nine years later, with Justin Trudeau's Liberals back in power, D'Arcy McGee's is looking more and more like a resurgent Grit hangout in the post-federal election power shift.

Ottawa's 5-to-7 after-work hours are an "incredible time for information sharing," say Greg MacEachern, vice-president of government relations at Environics.

"Despite all our mobile devices, a lot of information in Ottawa is transmitted over a glass of wine and an hors d'oeuvre," he said.

Photographer Raphael says there's a definite drinking culture on the Hill.

"There's a reason they all have (drivers)," he said.

There are a few factors that go into making a spot a regular hangout for political power players and their hangers on — chief among them proximity to Parliament Hill.

"The top spots are — you can almost draw a straight line — Metropolitain, D'Arcy's, Hy's and Brixton's," MacEachern said.

With the historic Hy's Steakhouse closing shop next year, the up-and-coming Bier Markt is still central in the city's political topography.

There are several factors that influence where politicos hang out. Beyond location, service counts. Having a favourite drink appear magically on the bar at a given establishment is an experience that has won over the hearts and the wallets of many a political staffer.

Then there's partisanship — a Liberal pub, an NDP bar, a Tory brasserie — with political tribes staking claims to specific spots, even though the businesses themselves welcome all customers.

Summa Strategies consultant Angela Christiano also expects an uptick in official receptions in early 2016 as stakeholder groups try to get their issues on the Liberal government's radar and build relationships with new MPs and their staff in a social setting.

"It gives that casual opportunity to have an off-the-cuff conversation," she said.

With upward of three events a night being hosted on and around the Hill at peak times in the political calendar, it makes for a busy reception circuit.

"We call it speed dating for MPs," said MacEachern.

> **The top spots are — you can almost draw a straight line — Metropolitan, D'Arcy's, Hy's and Brixton's.**
> Greg MacEachern

THE LUXE

Another bar to look out for

The night before he was sworn in as prime minister, Trudeau, his top aides and the entire soon-to-be Liberal cabinet gathered at the Luxe bistro in the ByWard Market for a private party. The bar's website describes it as "contemporary and refined, yet casual."

MONARCHY

Justin Trudeau 'honoured' by arrangement to meet Queen

Thirty-eight years after his father caused an international sensation with a pirouette behind an oblivious Queen, Justin Trudeau is going to meet the monarch.

The prime minister says he's looking forward to meeting and speaking with the Queen on his way to Malta near the end of the month.

Trudeau will visit her before attending the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Valetta Nov. 27-29 and later the United Nations climate-change conference in Paris.

Former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, known for his flamboyance, was caught on camera doing a pirouette behind the Queen in May 1977 as they took part in a G7 summit in London, England.

Years after what many thought was a spontaneous event, one of Pierre Trudeau's aides revealed that the gesture was planned and even rehearsed as a show of disdain for a palace protocol that separated heads of government from heads of state.

This time, the younger Trudeau is indicating that he doesn't share that attitude.

"As the Queen's 12th Canadian prime minister, I am honoured and very much look forward to spending this time in conversation with her."

"In her role as Queen of Canada, she has not only witnessed but also been an active participant in the evolution of our country over the past 63 years. Her Majesty will remain an integral part of our country's progress and future."

The Prime Minister's Office said a precise time for the audience has yet to be announced.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **I am absolutely delighted that Her Majesty has graciously agreed to this meeting.**
> Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a statement

Queen Elizabeth II
RICHARD POHLE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

EU's passport-free area under threat

EUROPE

Nations take action to slow huge influx of migrants

Slovenian soldiers set barbed wire fences on the Slovenian-Croatian border near Rakovec on Thursday. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Passport-free travel in Europe is under threat as countries reintroduce border controls, toughen security and build fences in response to the biggest refugee emergency the continent has seen in decades.

The Schengen open-borders zone uniting 30 countries is a pinnacle of European achievement. It underpins the EU economy, allowing goods, services and people to cross frontiers without checks.

But Sweden says security at its borders cannot be assured and announced checks were resuming on Thursday, while tiny Slovenia has begun erecting a fence to stem the flow of people from Croatia, the second nation, after Hungary, to resort to such a measure.

These uncoordinated and unilateral actions in response to unpredictable movements of thousands of people have raised doubts about whether the passport-free area can survive the migrant challenge.

"Saving Schengen is a race against time," EU Council President Donald Tusk warned on Thursday after a migration summit with European and African leaders in Malta.

He cited individual moves by Germany, Sweden, Slovenia and others in response to what they see as threats to their border security from thousands of migrants streaming in from Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

"Without effective control of our external borders, Schengen will not survive," Tusk said.

The two-day summit was meant to focus on how to send back to Africa those who don't qualify for asylum and discourage others from attempting the risky journey across the seas in search of a better life.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BURUNDI

UN decries killings amid genocide fear

A Burundian soldier guards a street in the troubled nation. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The UN Security Council unanimously approved a resolution Thursday condemning killings in Burundi and threatening sanctions, while international leaders urgently called for the government and opposition to meet amid fears the African nation is at risk of genocide.

Witnesses say the killings, torture and human rights violations are the result of a government crackdown on opposition members. Statements by Burundian officials last week echoed language used in the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda, where more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were slaughtered in a campaign orchestrated by Rwanda's Hutu-majority extremist government.

Like Rwanda, Burundi has a history of tensions between its Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. At least 240 people have been killed in Burundi since protests began in April against President Pierre Nkurunziza's ultimately successful quest for a third term.

"We know how high the stakes are," Britain's UN Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said after the council vote. "We know that in the worst case what we're talking about is a possible genocide, and we know that we have to do everything we possibly can to prevent that."

The French-drafted council resolution asks UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to deploy a team to Burundi to work with the government, African Union and other partners to "develop options to address political and security concerns."

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Kari Kivela, head of design at Ouraring, shows a "wellness" ring at Slush 2015. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gadgets move past fitness bracelets

TECHNOLOGY

Devices aim to cover every age and area of human health

After the smartphone and fitness bracelet, here comes the smart ring. And the smart pacifier. And smart rollator.

"Wellness" computers that monitor your pulse, temperature and other health indicators are becoming increasingly sophisticated and varied to cover every aspect — and age — of human life.

Some products, like the ring by Finnish startup Ouraring, are specialized in optimizing physical training by tracking sleep patterns and physical activity.

Others are looking to fit into health-care services struggling to cope with aging populations.

Health gadgets took the limelight at this week's Slush fair, a gathering of technology startups that has drawn 800 investors and an estimated 15,000 participants worldwide.

Lasse Leppakorpi, the founder and CEO of Beddit, a startup specializing in sleep-monitoring equipment, says new gadgets will increasingly change the role of doctors to becoming "consultants and experts" for people concerned about their well-being.

The maker of the smart ring, Ouraring, believes it has an advantage over companies providing only sleep-monitoring equipment, such as smart beds equipped with sensor straps under bed sheets.

"Our rings monitor when you're asleep, when you're awake, if you're sitting, when you're on the move," said Kari Kivela, head of design at the Finnish company based in the city of Oulu, a former Nokia hub.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

market minute

DOLLAR 75.29¢ (-0.10¢)
TSX 13,127.18 (-214.75)
OIL $41.75 US (-$1.18)
GOLD $1,081.00 US (-$3.90)

NATURAL GAS: $2.260 US (+0.3¢)
DOW JONES: 17,448.07 (-254.15)

IN BRIEF

Sale of Hydro One shares nets more than $5 billion

The Ontario government raised a total of $1.83 billion from the sale of the first 15 per cent of shares in Hydro One, the giant electricity transmission utility. The province also gained about $2.2 billion from a deferred tax asset benefit and another $1 billion from a special dividend and payments-in-lieu of taxes. The government plans another three offerings of Hydro One shares, but insists it will retain control with 40 per cent of the shares.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NEW YORK CITY

Tracking homeless seen as harassment

On an app, pins on a New York City map keep track of sightings of homelessness, accompanied by photos of people lying on sidewalks, slumped in doorways, sitting on curbs with shopping carts piled high with bags. Hashtags frame the scenes: "NeedsMedicalAid," "Encampment," "Aggressive Begging," "Violent."

On a similar Facebook page, residents of a Manhattan neighbourhood share pictures and complaints about people living on the streets, some half-naked. A website created by a police union posts pictures of the homeless and vows, "We are watching you!"

Advocates for the homeless see such efforts as more harassment than help. Dave Giffen, the executive director of the Coalition for the Homeless, calls the initiatives "unethical and inhumane." But organizers say they are illustrating a pressing social problem. "People thought I was picking on the homeless," says Ed Mullins, who heads the police sergeants' union that maintains Peek-a-booNYC. "My question is, 'Well, what can you do better?'"

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Weekend, November 13-15, 2015

PRO CON

Should hospitals allow visitors 24/7?

Three Ottawa hospitals have ditched limits on visiting hours for patients' friends and families in an effort to promote more holistic health care and reduce isolation. But is bringing familiar faces from home into the hospital really the best way to heal?

YES: TLC from family is the best medicine

Being seriously ill is scary and lonely, but having a family member or trusted friend with you — outside of the typical afternoon visiting hours — can help. And allowing that is in line with the trend toward a more family-focused, patient-centred approach to health care. Family members also know more about the patient and their history than doctors or nurses ever could. They can pitch in with tasks like feeding and personal care, and they may be able to notice when something is off. According to the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, patients whose loved ones are allowed to stay with them in hospital experience fewer medication errors and falls, shorter stays, fewer readmissions and a generally better experience and standard of care.

NO: Patients need peace and quiet

Visiting hours enforce a period of restful calm, especially during the night, to allow patients to sleep and heal. Hospital staff already have the discretion to allow visitors to stay when circumstances warrant it. But visiting hours allow them to effectively get interlopers to leave if they're being loud or inconsiderate. Unlimited visiting will disproportionately affect people who can't afford a private or semi-private room: Even quiet talking can disturb the sleep of someone who is in pain and in an unfamiliar environment. Certain units — such as maternity, children's wards, intensive care and palliative care — already routinely allow visitors around the clock. Finally, more people coming and going might mean more infections, and could pose security issues, especially at night when fewer staff are on duty.

Stop excusing sexism: Ordain women already

Michael Coren
For Metro

It's the last acceptable face of misogyny. I speak of conservative Christianity, principally the Roman Catholic Church and hardline evangelical Protestants, who manage to routinely discriminate against women and still enjoy a status in society that would be denied any secular organization that acted in a similar manner.

I am utterly convinced that if women had been priests, the (sexual-abuse crisis) never would have developed.

The reality is that no matter how great their ability or suitability, no woman can ever be ordained as a priest or a minister in these churches, and it's time we asked some serious questions and stopped allowing sexism to hide behind religion.

The Roman Catholic argument is that Jesus was a man, and as the prime role of the priest is to represent Christ at the Mass, no woman could fulfill the position. But Jesus was also Jewish, spoke Aramaic and was born of a virgin. Try as I might I have never found an Aramaic-speaking, Jewish priest born of a virgin serving mass in Canada. Perhaps I need to look further afield!

Seriously though, if this is the best it can do the Catholic Church is on pretty shaky ground. The central word here is "represent." Every Christian believes that there is only one Jesus, but that someone can represent Him without resembling Him.

The irony is that Jesus didn't share such prejudice. He surrounded Himself with devout women, told His followers to revere His mother, and the first people to see the resurrected Christ were women — not initially believed by the frightened, faithless men they told.

Women not only played a central role in founding the church, but also in maintaining it, especially through the darkest times of ancient oppression. There were certainly women deacons and possibly female priests. But the patriarchy was at its strongest in medieval Europe and the role of Christian women was rapidly diminished.

Non-Catholic Christians who deny female ordination point to various scriptural statements concerning male leadership and female subservience, but as with so much of the Bible, context and historical understanding are vital. Today many, perhaps most, Protestant churches ordain women. Yet there is, alas, still resistance.

Nor is just about equality. As someone who has written extensively about the Catholic sexual-abuse crisis, I am utterly convinced that if women had been priests the horror would never have developed and certainly wouldn't have been hidden.

Christianity still has so much to offer the world, but it can only do so if it abandons outdated, ugly and irrelevant conventions.

Michael Coren is a writer, broadcaster and author of the forthcoming Epiphany: A Christian's Change of Heart & Mind over Same-Sex Marriage.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

If anyone asked me what unites Canadians, I'd be stumped

Letters-to-the-editor pages in newspapers somehow still exist.

In a world suffocated by opinion (mine, yours, and both our dogs' on FB, Twitter, Insta, Reddit, article comments, YouTube comments), it seems a little quaint, no?

And yet there I was, reading the letters section of the National Post the other day. And boy, was that fun.

Charles in Nanaimo knows better than Keystone XL bigwigs that Obama always had it in for the pipeline.

Jack in Victoria suggests the end of all intersections, in favour of roundabouts, if the Liberals really want to invest in infrastructure.

Albert, also from Victoria, is wigged out about 25,000 Syrian refugees really getting a good vetting.

Osama in Calgary has some eloquent words of loyalty and support for Canadian soldiers.

Some letter-writers sound as nutty as the emails I often get. Some people sound sane. And there's actually a diversity of opinion. There are full sentences and complete attribution, including city of residence, and no Ayn Rand-inspired handles.

It's like, I dunno, a reflection of Canadians? A cross-section of opinion I would maybe see in other papers but definitely not in my various social media feeds.

There, I follow people who interest me, and while there's a bit of political diversity, it's not much. Inflammatory (to me) opinions are at a minimum. Thus, according to the bulk of my digital newsfeeds, Canadians are pretty thrilled with Trudeau, and we'd be cool if the official opposition didn't show up.

Reading the letters felt like checking in with extended family. Still right-wingers out there, hey? Good to know. The whole fear of immigrants and refugees, that's healthy? Okay, got it. And you went on a cruise, you say? Glad that was fun.

It reminded me of a dinner I had recently, where I got a little worked up, I'll admit, because my companion, an old family friend, really thinks Islam (and all religions) is evil.

I think I could have kept my voice down and saved the pub a few high-pitched broken wine glasses if only I'd had some reminder lately that not everyone agrees with me.

Shocking, I know.

And that people still very much and very deeply fear the "other." Still, to me, shocking.

I like getting a multi-paragraphed window into those right-wing others, and then see their full names in italics. It gives their views more weight. It makes them real.

It reminds me that if anyone asked me to describe what unites Canadians, I'd be stumped. Plus, these guys (they appear to all be men) are a hoot.

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New Real Estate Bonanza

Right now while you are reading this, hedge funds are buying U.S. property in mass. Foreign nationals are loading up on houses as fast as they can. Some savvy individuals are snapping up housing in the U.S. like never before.

In October, Reuters reported private investment firm Starwood Capital Group got in the game. They purchased 23,262 mid-rise and garden-style apartments for a whopping $5.37 billion. Other hedge funds are buying entire subdivisions under construction.

The Chinese are the number one overseas investors of U.S. real estate. Often they will buy 10 condos at once, sight unseen.

Does all this investment activity show the U.S. headed for another property bubble? The answer is no.

Demographics are driving demand for rental property to heights unseen in American history. Bloomberg Business says rents are only going higher.

The Millennials saddled with student debt, are choosing to rent. Others want to live in cities and avoid long commutes home ownership often demands.

One of the fastest growing demographic segments in the U.S. is those over age 65. Their downsizing activity is flooding the market with discounted property.

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MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION DIGITAL

Movies that mine the news

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

Some films stick to facts, others play hard and loose

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

In 2010, thirty-three men spent sixty-nine days trapped underground in a copper-gold mine located near Copiapó, Chile. Their story became the inspiration for the new Antonio Banderas movie, The 33. HANDOUT

The movies have looked to the news for inspiration almost since the first time film was projected on screens.

As far back as 1899, a film called Major Wilson's Last Stand dramatized scenes from the First and Second Matabele Wars, including the death of Major Allan Wilson and his men in Rhodesia in 1893.

The trend of reel life emulating real life continues this weekend with The 33, an Antonio Banderas film based on a famous mining accident. In 2010, 33 men spent 69 days trapped underground in a copper-gold mine located near Copiapó, Chile when a rock the size of the Empire State Building blocked their exit.

"I can't think of a better story than this one to bring to the screen," says producer Mike Medavoy.

The trick is getting the story right. Director Patricia Riggins worked with the miners, Medavoy and screenwriters to create a story that, according to everyone involved, features more fact than fiction.

That isn't always the case.

According to IMDb the Jim Sturgess movie 21 calls itself a "fact based" story about a group of MIT students who used a complicated card-counting system to fleece Las Vegas casinos for millions of dollars.

The bare bones of the story are true — blackjack was played and MIT students counted cards — but Hollywood diverged from reality when casting the leads. In truth the main players were mainly Asian-Americans, including ringleader Jeff Ma who consulted on the movie.

Ma called the controversy surrounding the casting of Sturgess and Kevin Spacey "over-blown," adding "I would have been a lot more insulted if they had chosen someone who was Japanese or Korean, just to have an Asian playing me."

The Michael Bay film Pain & Gain is listed as an action-comedy and stars Mark Wahlberg, Dwayne Johnson and Anthony Mackie certainly play up the jokes. Everyone laughed, except for Marc Schiller, the real-life inspiration for the film's kidnap victim.

"It wasn't that funny when they tried to kill me," he said. "They did run me over with a car twice after trying to blow me up in the car. The way they tell it made it look like a comedy. You also gotta remember that not only I went through this, but certain people were killed, so making these guys look like nice guys is atrocious."

Last year's Oscar winner Whiplash saw Miles Teller as a young drummer driven to extremes by a fanatical music teacher played by J.K. Simmons.

The movie draws parallels to the famous story of Jo Jones and Charlie Parker. The legend goes that Jones threw a cymbal at Parker's head after a lackluster solo, prompting the sax player to go away, practice for a year and return as one of the greatest musicians of the 20th century. Trouble is, the story isn't true. A cymbal was let loose, but according to eyewitnesses it was dropped on the floor at Parker's feet and not at his head.

"Not attempted murder," wrote Richard Brody in the New York Times, "but rather musical snark."

How does Hollywood get away playing fast and loose with the facts? Black Mass director Scott Cooper says, "I don't think people come to narrative features for the facts, or for truth. I think you go to documentaries for that. What you do come to narrative features for is psychological truth, emotion and deep humanity."

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Love the Coopers ★★
Spotlight ★★★★
Heist ★
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STEP INTO ANOTHER WORLD

Stanley Tucci stars as Boston lawyer Mitchell Garabedian, who fought to bring attention to abuse within the Catholic Church. HANDOUT

Spotlight tells 'such an important story': Tucci

INTERVIEW

Actor praises investigative journalism, Pope Francis

Matt Prigge
Metro | New York

Stanley Tucci made one of the great food movies (1996's Big Night) and has even written two cookbooks. But right now all he has time for is an organic protein bar. "This evening I'll have a martini. Don't worry," he assures us as he powers through a junket for Spotlight, which tells about the Boston Globe's Pulitzer-winning expose of the Catholic Church scandal in 2002.

Tucci doesn't play one of the reporters but Mitchell Garabedian, a cranky but dedicated attorney who fought for years, amidst untold frustration, to bring the abuse to light.

You're not playing one of the journalists here, but you have a history playing reporters on film, including Joe Gould's Secret and Winchell. It seems that, along with the scandal itself, that would be a big pull for you too.

(Journalists) really are quite heroic in what they do. And their ilk is disappearing. It's getting harder and harder to come by guys like that.

The long-form kind of journalism the Globe reporters practice in this film is going away as newspapers suffer through budget cuts.

It is, and nothing can take its place. John (Slattery, who plays managing editor Ben Bradlee Jr.) pointed out the other night that having cell phones and video taping things as they happen is really important. But that's just happenstance. It's not the same as someone taking the time and seeing something out and thinking, "I know there's something wrong here, or there's something right here, and I need to spend the time dissecting it."

That takes a lot of effort, a lot of resources, a lot of passion.

Of course there's what they reported itself, which even now hasn't been fully rectified.

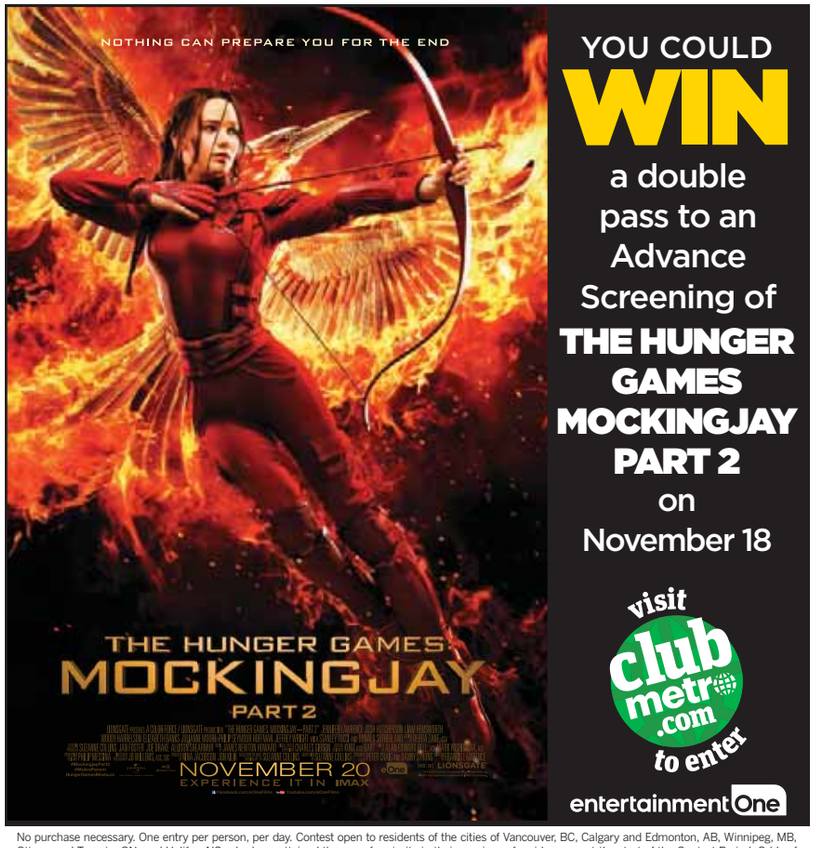
It's such an important story. The fact that it was a systemic problem that has been going on for decades — for centuries — and the collusion between the perpetrators and the Catholic Church and other outside powers is so profound. They protected all the wrong people — the perpetrators — instead of protecting the children. They didn't try to stop the crimes or punish them. That is horrifying. That is absolutely horrifying, and unconscionable, and, let's say, it's un-Christian.

> **I hope the Church will keep changing and embracing the new societal changes that are crucial.**
> Stanley Tucci

I'm actually not sure what your history with the Catholic Church is.

I was raised Catholic, but I'm a lapsed Catholic for 40 years. Even when I was a kid I just didn't get it, to put it simply. This is in no way to besmirch people who are devout Catholics; it just wasn't for me. But the Catholic Church has done so much good for people over the centuries, and good is still being done. I think this new pope is extraordinary.

And I think people should in no way see this film as an indictment of the Catholic Church. There were simply a large number of people within the Catholic Church who failed to right systemic wrongs, which is anathema to everything the Church espouses. And it's an insult to the parishioners and to Catholicism as a whole. It's an insult.



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AFGHANISTAN MISSION

Theatre of war in graphic detail

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

You may have removed the Remembrance Day poppy from your lapel for another year but that doesn't mean you can't still honour the sacrifice of our war veterans.

"Whether you're Canadian or British, society doesn't pay enough attention," said former U.K. army medic Paul 'Tug' Hartley, whose life-saving actions are the basis of the acclaimed new film Kilo Two Bravo. "You see on the news a British soldier got killed (and then) they carry on. This film will give people insight into five hours of someone's life. That's all it was but look how impactful it is."

A vivid adaptation about a small company of commandos who suddenly find themselves trying to escape a valley loaded with live land mines, Kilo Two Bravo isn't just (as Hartley describes) one of the "million stories they could have told" about the war in Afghanistan, it's the kind of nail-biting thriller that exhibits the true solidarity of soldiers.

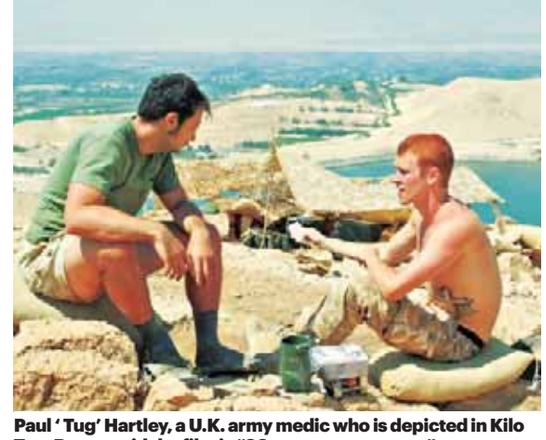
"I remember saying I'm happy to sign up for this so long as you tell our story," recalled Hartley, who originally feared filmmakers would exploit the harrowing tale. "It's not a war movie. It's a movie about adversity and heroism. This could've happened in a car crash; it's just about a bunch of people who come together and do what they did."

But for the actor who recreates Hartley's acts of medical heroism on-screen, the real life situation is not to be understated. In fact, even just pretending to be there was a stressful experience.

"The whole shoot was very intense — six days a week, 15 hours a day in 55-degree heat. All of those conditions affect you psychologically," admitted Game of Thrones star Mark Stanley of the chronologically-shot drama. "Was there time to decompress? I don't think so. I think we probably just drank too much on our days off."

Hartley doesn't diminish the actors' difficult job either. Having seen the film several times now, he insists that moviegoers are certainly in for an authentic experience.

"It's 99 per cent accurate," said Hartley. "The only way you were going to get that extra one per cent is if you had been there and bled with us."



Paul ' Tug' Hartley, a U.K. army medic who is depicted in Kilo Two Bravo, said the film is "99 per cent accurate." HANDOUT

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FILM BRIEF

Life could be a beach for actress Nina Dobrev

Who will run along the beach in a red swimsuit alongside Dwayne Johnson and Zac Efron in the movie remake of the famous Baywatch series? Deadline reports that Paramount Pictures has a shortlist of seven actresses, including Nina Dobrev.

Free from any contract ties since the spring, Dobrev the former Vampire Diaries star now has time to focus on the big screen.

But replacing Pamela Anderson in the role of the Malibu nymph will not be an easy task. The production has apparently also got its eye on Alexandra Daddario, (Percy Jackson), Ashley Benson (Pretty Little Liars), Alexandra Shipp (N.W.A Straight Outta Compton), Shelley Hennig (Teen Wolf), Bianca Santos (Ouija) and the singer Denyse Tontz.

AFP

THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

'I'm ready to be wooed,' Simon said, as I readied my blade. 'But I'm not ready to go to the hospital so please don't miss any bones.'

Angelina Jolie Pitt and her husband Brad want you to know that By the Sea, which opens in select theatres Friday, is an art film — perhaps to distinguish it from the commercial hit in which they first appeared on screen together 10 years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Yes, both movies are about a married couple with troubles. But no longer are they playing assassins hired to kill each other. This time, she's a former dancer, he's a writer suffering a block, and together, they've suffered through a traumatic event. They retreat to a seaside French hotel to brood, fight, cry, smoke, drink and spy on a honeymooning couple.

"I know some people are going to hate it," Jolie Pitt, who wrote, directed and stars in By the Sea, told the New York Times. "Some are going to like it. But it was important to me to feel like an artist again."

"The plan was to make something together, with complete autonomy," Pitt told V Magazine, "in the footsteps of Gena (Rowlands) and John (Cassavetes)."

Admirable, to be sure: but Rowlands and Cassavetes were never the most recognizable celebrities on Earth. Besides, whether you're making a movie — or making dinner — things rarely go according to plan. Initial reviews have been lukewarm. "There's no catharsis at the end from the journey taken," the Hollywood Reporter wrote, "just relief that it's over."

THE MOVIE: By the Sea

THE MEAL: Stuffed Sea Bream

I know the feeling: May, 2002, San Vito Lo Capo in Sicily. My boyfriend at the time and I spent three days and nights by the sea during the last legs of our eight-year-long relationship. I suspect that we both knew it was coming to a close but neither of us was brave enough to admit it.

There was no drama, no tears and only some brooding on my part: I read Treasure Island on our hotel's room little balcony at night under moonlight.

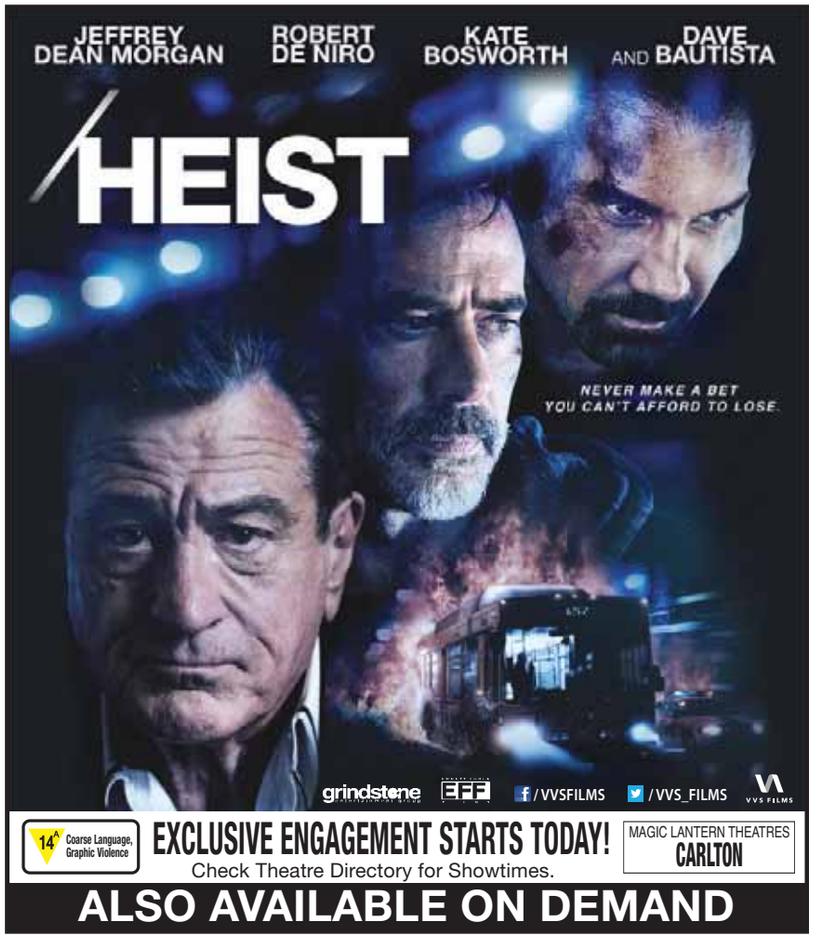
Besides the florescent blue of the sea, I also remember our meals at a local restaurant where for three nights we ate fish, make that a whole fish, which neither of us had dealt with before. Although I couldn't fix the relationship, or even identify what precisely went wrong, I took charge. "Give it here," I said, confidently cutting the head and tail off, gently pulling it open, like a rare book and removing the bones. By the third night, I'd mastered the task.

Deboning whole fish became a flirting device for me. When Simon and I were courting a decade ago, I'd order it on dates to woo him. Although it clearly worked, I've only done it once at home — until Sunday night when I picked up two sea breams, orata in Italian, stuffed them with parsley, dill and lemon slices, covered them in olive oil and salt, and slapped them on the grill.

"I'm ready to be wooed," Simon said, as I readied my blade. "But I'm not ready to go to the hospital so please don't miss any bones."

While I decapitated the fish, we argued over what Cassavetes film to watch. Years ago, Simon used the art house director to woo me. He wanted to watch Minnie and Moskowitz. Me? A Woman Under the Influence. We split it down the middle and decided on The Birdcage.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.



Now playing

DRAMA

Entertainment

Director: Rick Alverson
Starring: Michael Cera, John C. Reilly

A broken, aging comedian tours the California desert, lost in a cycle of third-rate venues, novelty tourist attractions, and vain attempts to reach his estranged daughter. Fuelled by the promise of a lucrative Hollywood engagement, he trudges through a series of increasingly surreal encounters.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 90% Audience: 95%

DRAMA/ROMANCE

By The Sea

Director: Angelina Jolie
Starring: Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt

A married couple takes a vacation in France in the 1970s and finds that their time in a sleepy seaside town, complete with a unique array of locals, strengthens their bond and reaffirms their marriage.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 29% Audience: 86%

DRAMA

Spotlight

Director: Tom McCarthy
Starring: Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton

This film tells the riveting true story of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Boston Globe investigation that would rock the city and cause a crisis in one of the world's oldest and most trusted institutions. This tense thriller traces the steps to one of the biggest cover-ups in modern times.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 96% Audience: 97%

ACTION

Heist

Director: Scott Mann
Starring: Robert De Niro, Jeffrey Dean Morgan

When their attempt to rob a casino owned by the feared gangster Pope goes awry, Vaughn and Cox are forced to flee on foot and hijack city Bus 657 and take the passengers hostage. Now, in a high speed chase, Vaughn not only has to outwit the police, he will have to contend with Pope's maniacal right hand man, Dog.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: NOT YET REVIEWED Audience: 87%

DOCUMENTARY

Mavis!

Director: Jessica Edwards
Starring: Mavis Staples

This documentary provides an in-depth look at the life of legendary soul singer Mavis Staples and her family group, the Staple Singers. Mavis was a trailblazer who developed a unique gospel sound and was actively involved in the civil rights movement.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: Audience:
NOT YET REVIEWED

ACTION

Kilo Two Bravo

Director: Paul Katis
Starring: Ali Cook, David Elliot

A small unit of soldiers is positioned on a ridge overlooking the Kajaki dam. A three-man patrol sets out to disable a Taliban roadblock. At the foot of the ridge, one of the patrol detonates a land mine, blowing off his leg and setting into motion a desperate rescue mission.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 100% Audience: 89%

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Filmmaker Jessica Edwards was inspired to make Mavis! after seeing Mavis Staples live. COURTESY MARK POKEMPNER/FILM FIRST CO

A tribute to a soul legend

MUSIC ON FILM

Jeff Tweedy, Bonnie Raitt feature in doc about Staples

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

Many people feel inspired after seeing their favorite musician in concert but very few are motivated enough to make a movie. However that's exactly what septuagenarian soul singer Mavis Staples did to Jessica Edwards.

"It sort of sounds a little bit hokey but it's true, I wanted to make the movie because of the way that Mavis made me feel," explained the filmmaker about her debut documentary, Mavis! "I never experienced anything like that in my life and I wanted to feel that way again (and) I wanted other people to feel the way that I felt when I was listening to her."

Mavis Staples has certainly been electrifying audiences and deserving of a documentary ever since her and family band, The Staple Singers were crooning soul classics like Respect Yourself in the early '70s. Still performing at 76 years old, the entertainer and outspoken civil rights activist is even earning new fans thanks to collaborations with the likes of Wilco's Jeff Tweedy.

Indeed, her music has influenced a lot of artists. Although Edwards began the biography as a self-financed indie project, she soon discovered many celebrities wanted to speak about Staples. So Edwards took a less-is-more approach, favouring tributes from musicians with close personal connections — like Tweedy or Bonnie Raitt.

> **"I wanted to make the movie because of the way that Mavis made me feel.**
> Filmmaker Jessica Edwards

"It could have ended up being a hundred people (in the film)," explained Edwards. "But I've never been a fan of the talking head interview that comes on and doesn't have a lot to contribute (so) I tried hard not to just go off the handle and get Beyoncé and Jennifer Hudson or anybody I could get my hands on just because it made a good name."

Still, one superstar that Edwards did attempt to land was Prince (who worked on two of Staples's albums). While The Purple One turned down the invitation, Edwards insists he remained "very supportive" of the film.

"I don't think Prince has done an on-camera interview in decades," laughed Edwards. "(So) I had a big hunch an interview was going to be hard to get."

Mavis! is now playing in select theatres and available on iTunes.

MAVIS STAPLES' GREATEST HITS FOR OTHER PEOPLE

At least three classic Staple Singers songs are often associated with other artists:

•The Last Time — The Rolling Stones
The Staple Singers scored a hit with this traditional gospel song in 1955 but the ditty truly found success with a rock adaptation by The Stones a decade later.

•The Weight — The Band
In 1968, Robbie Robertson-led roots-rock act The Band had a big hit singing "take a load off Annie" but The Staple Singers also highlighted the hymn on their first album for Stax Records the same year.

• Respect Yourself — Bruce Willis
While The Staple Singers had a big hit with this catchy single in '72, Bruce Willis made it his signature song when he took a stab at a music career while still slugging it out on TV's Moonlighting in the '80s.

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Time to wind down the sentimentality

CASSETTE TAPES

Why a format that *should* be long-dead is still keeping it reel

Alan Cross
For Metro Canada

We need to have a conversation about the cassette. While it served us well — in the '80s, propelled by the boombox, the Walkman and car audio, the cassette was briefly the best-selling format for pre-recorded music — its time is over.

Eclipsed by CDs, CD burners and then digital music files, there's no reason why cassettes should still exist.

Yet there's a vocal group of music fans clamouring for a vinyl-like resurrection.

September had Cassette Store Day. There are dozens of cassette-only labels. Bloggers romanticize (fetishize?) the old-school cassette mixtape.

Clearly these people weren't around during the original days of the cassette: Mixtapes had to be recorded in real time; the tapes jammed; pre-recorded albums sounded awful and they the melted on the dashboard or ended up under the seats of the car.

So why are cassettes still here?

1 **Luddite hipsters:** The inconvenience of cassettes trumps that of enjoying music on vinyl, demonstrating an even greater love for music. Or so they'd have us believe.

2 **Curiosity:** Blink-182 just announced that four of their biggest albums will be re-released on cassette. These are just tchotchkes; wannabe collector's items.

3 **Emerging markets:** Cassettes do have their rugged side. They stand up well to the heat and dust of places like Africa and India. Just don't let them sit in direct sunlight.

4 **Japan:** Yes, it's the land of the electronic gadget, but walk into any small store and you'll find packages of cassettes for sale.

Huge swaths of Japanese culture are very conservative and continue to hang on to the old ways. Hey, fax machines are still a thing over there.

5 **Prison Releases:** Enough people are incarcerated in the U.S. — more than 2.2 million as of 2013 — for convicts be a viable standalone music market.

CDs are forbidden in jails because they can be turned into shanks. MP3 players are allowed but without Internet access, they're useless. Vinyl? Hardly.

The only remaining option is the lowly cassette.

But you can't just use any type of cassette tape in prison. Companies like Fortress Audio and Duplication.ca offer blank cassettes made with clear shells (to prevent smuggling) and without any screws (they can be weaponized) specifically for prison use.

There are also services like Music 4 Inmates that specialize in providing music for the incarcerated — on cassette, of course.

While most of us have moved on, the cassette will still be here for a while to come.

SPONSORED CONTENT

The War Amps keep Sheriauna dancing

Being born missing her left arm hasn't stopped nine-year-old Sheriauna of Scarborough from living a full and active life.

Sheriauna likes to dance. Thanks to support from The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program, she received a "tumbling" arm, which has a flat base in place of a hand, allowing her to do various floor moves.

Sheriauna's mom, Sherylee, says the new device has been great for her daughter.

"She uses her device for acrobatics in dance," she says. "It allows her to do what everyone else can do, such as handstands and cartwheels."

The War Amps encourages Champs to develop a positive attitude towards their amputation and live to their full potential. With the public's support of the Key Tag and Address Label Service, young amputees like Sheriauna obtain the tools they need to enjoy their favourite activities.

Sheriauna dancing with her tumbling device.
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Seoul district to erect 'Gangnam Style' statue

Deep into Guatemala's emerald forest

TIKAL

Hike reveals ancient sites and curious creatures

Aurélie Resch
For Metro Canada

It all starts with a warning sign at the entrance. Located near a pond, it warns of the presence of crocodiles and tells visitors to keep away from the water. You are also advised that snakes, insects and animals hide in the forest and that it is preferable to stay on the path.

My Guatemalan guide picks a spider out of a hole on the ground, gently placing it in my hand. "She is not hungry. You're OK," he tells me as I look at the fat, fuzzy tarantula sitting in my palm. I totally forget about the "OK" part as soon as the tarantula starts to walk her way along my arm.

I squirm and throw the poor thing onto a fellow journalist's shoulder. She starts to scream. Strange encounters abound in the archeological site of Tikal, Guatemala, enough to fill anyone's lust for adventure.

Visiting Tikal is like entering a lost world enveloped by a lush emerald forest. The trees and bushes create a gigantic web of green, with intertwining leaves, roots and branches. It is estimated the Guatemalan jungle hides 4,000 Mayan structures, all dating back to the eighth century.

The ruins of a temple in the jungles of Tikal. Above: The Lost World complex. PHOTOS BY AURÉLIE RESCH/FOR METRO

STAR WARS
George Lucas used Tikal as one of the settings for the rebel base Yavin 4 in 1977's Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope.

The humidity (it's 35 C) makes the uphill hike a bit of a challenge. Walking toward the pre-Columbian pyramids the quiet solitude is broken by some sudden loud shrieks.

The howler monkeys sitting at the top of the trees, and swinging from one branch to another, are just greeting us as we enter the site. (We actually feel lucky since they aren't throwing their excrement at us, something they have been known to do). A bit further down we run into a dozen coatis — Central American raccoons — playing near the path.

In Tikal, I marvel at the acoustics of the Plaza of the Seven Temples, clapping my hands and listening to it echo off the walls of the structures. I am in awe at the two main sets of pyramids: the Lost World and the Great Plaza.

The former is the most ancient group of pyramids on the site and features 30 temples and pyramids built along astronomical alignments to solstices, equinoxes and certain important stars.

After climbing up one of the pyramids — some of them are 60 metres high — I take some time to enjoy the stunning view. The tops of temples emerge from the emerald jungle, birds fly out of the ceiba trees, and other visitors to the site look like ants scurrying around the base of the pyramid far below.

It's easy to feel like you have been transported back to the days of the Mayans.

GETTING THERE

The National Park of Tikal is located in northern Guatemala in the Peten province. There are two airlines flying to Isla de Flores. At its Mundo Maya airport, you can contact a tour operator that can offer you transportation with a guide.

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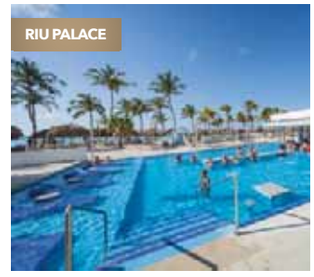

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3 AIRBNB PROPERTIES WHERE THE FORCE RUNS STRONG

From an off-grid earthship carved into the desert of New Mexico to earth domes in California reminiscent of the planet Tatooine, Airbnb has collected Star Wars-inspired properties across its network that are located in a galaxy that's actually not so far away. **AFP**

1 Joshua Tree, California

Perhaps the most similar in likeness to Luke Skywalker's home planet Tatooine and the Lars homestead, the terracotta-coloured **Sleep Pod Earth Domes** are set in the California desert and can sleep families of up to four. Dome walls are built using Earthbag technology that keep buildings cool in the summer and warm in winter.

2 Taos, New Mexico

For Star Wars fans who are also lovers of the earth, the **Brand New Studio Earthship** is a secluded, self-powered retreat in the New Mexico desert. The property is completely off-grid, catching its own rainwater and generating its own electricity thanks to solar panels. Moreover, thanks to being carved out of the New Mexico desert, the property also recalls Skywalker's home planet.

3 Khao Yai, Thailand

An aerial view of the **Modern Green Circular Dome** suggests a more illustrious past for the resort, as though it crash-landed in the middle of a Thai jungle forest and stayed. Like spokes on a wheel, individual, spherical pods jut out from a circular walkway and are covered with jungle overgrowth. Pods are clean and bright, furnished with beds, full bathrooms, TVs, communal dining room and pool.

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Road to Downton
With The British Royale, a one-time-only, 10-day itinerary slated for next August, Insight Vacations is offering a glimpse into British high society. Forty guests will hit haute restaurants and private clubs around London and Edinburgh, hop on the Royal Yacht Britannia and tour the real Downton Abbey — upstairs and down. Act fast. Visit InsightVacations.com.

DOUG WALLACE

Highclere Castle in Hampshire. CONTRIBUTED

Where art, fashion collide in Miami

DESIGN DISTRICT

Eclectic murals and sculptures mingle with luxury shops

It was once was a pineapple farm. Then a rough, industrial neighbourhood overlooking a furniture district. Today, the Miami Design District is emerging as an upscale shopping and art mecca.

The neighbourhood is located just a few miles from downtown and South Beach. Its attractions include contemporary art installations, a parking garage that's an architectural head-turner, and storefront luxury shops from Hermes to Tom Ford, with a concentration of jewelry and timepiece brands.

"We're able to provide them with spaces that allow the brands to present the full range of their creative expression, from the architecture and design of their stores to the scope of their merchandise offering," said Craig Robins, a native Miami developer and CEO of the real estate company Dacra who is also credited with helping with the transformation of South Beach.

The Design District also becomes a major hub during Art Basel Miami in early December, when art takes over the city.

By the end of 2016, the 18-square-block neighbourhood will include more than 200 retailers from Christian Dior and Rag & Bone to Van Cleef & Arpels, art galleries, design showrooms and restaurants, as well as a boutique hotel and luxury residential condos and lofts.

Art installations

The late Buckminster Fuller designed the Fly's Eye Dome in 1965, calling it an "autonomous dwelling machine." The Neo-Futuristic architect's vision of a 24-foot fibreglass circular dome that could serve as a home has been brought to life at 140 NE 39th St. Overlooking the dome is a larger-than-life polyurethane foam-and-resin sculpture of the late architect Le Corbusier by the French artist Xavier Veihan.

Nearby are two murals created by the collaborative studio 2x4 including "Jungle," an homage to the urban landscape of South Florida, with bright colours, plants and animals painted on the wall; and "Vortex," which creates an optical illusion with its black and white circular strokes.

FINDING IT
The Design District is located between two neighbourhoods, Wynwood/Buena Vista and Midtown heading toward the downtown Brickell area.

A sculpture of the late architect Le Corbusier by the French artist Xavier Veilhan appears across from the Fly's Eye Dome in the Miami Design District. WILFREDO LEE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

On a second-floor terrace is "Netscape," a 24-seat web of hanging chairs by German designer Konstanin Grcic.

A mixed-use retail building inspired by waterfalls and rain squalls by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto will be completed by 2016. The two-story building will feature glass fins extending from the rooftop down to the open courtyard.

A couple of blocks away is Miami's Institute of Contemporary Art at 4040 NE Second Ave.

Garages as art

Next to busy Interstate 95 is the City View Garage (enter on NE 38th Street between NE First Avenue and North Miami Avenue), its wavy gold- and titanium-coated steel panels shimmering against the Miami sun. On the north and south sides are murals by artist John Baldessari including a cinematic image of swimmers, beach ball and all.

Another garage (not yet completed) will be a seven-storey mixed-use building with six different facades: a wall of recycled car tops; another of reflective traffic barriers repurposed as dynamic screens interspersed with flower boxes; a theatrical composition of graphic cartoon characters mixed with ornate baroque details; a corner panel of interlocking volumes that evoke puzzle pieces; a series of cut-outs dubbed "the ant farm" which exposes what is going on inside; and a painted mural of a candle being burned at both ends. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Craving cheese? Try going Dutch

BOOKING.COM

Guide offers alternatives to typical foodie destinations

A new guide for food lovers has revealed travellers' favourite destinations for beer, cheese, dim sum and chocolate, with a few unexpected results.

Using the 65 million guest reviews shared on their Destination Finder portal, online reservation site Booking.com compiled a Foodie's Guide to the Globe, determined by the strength of traveller endorsements.

And while the list includes predictable destinations such as Tokyo for sushi and Brussels for waffles, it also includes a few ideas that may inspire food lovers to try something new.

Here are a few standouts from the list of 15 foodie hotspots:

GOUDA, NETHERLANDS

Cheese

Evoke all things cheese and the knee-jerk reaction may be to think of France. But in fact, travellers highly recommend the city of Gouda, located in the southern Netherlands, where the cheese has been sold and traded for hundreds of years.

INCHEON, SOUTH KOREA

Chinese street food — outside China

As a major trading port with China, the city of Incheon, located outside Seoul and home to the South Korean international airport, is also home to the country's only official Chinatown.

LODI, U.S.

Wine

While Napa Valley may monopolize the title of wine country in the U.S., there's another wine destination in Northern California that's gaining attention in the wine world, Lodi. Just this week, Wine Enthusiast magazine named it the wine region of the year.

NUWARA ELIYA, SRI LANKA

High tea

It's not just the Brits who partake in this ceremonial ritual. In Nuwara Eliya, an area referred to as "Little England" for its tea plantations, visitors can sip on Ceylon tea and munch on cakes and sandwiches while soaking in the stunning misty mountainscape.

GRIMSBY, ENGLAND

Fish and chips

For the best, most authentic fish and chips, travellers recommend the seaside town of Grimsby on the northeast coast of England.

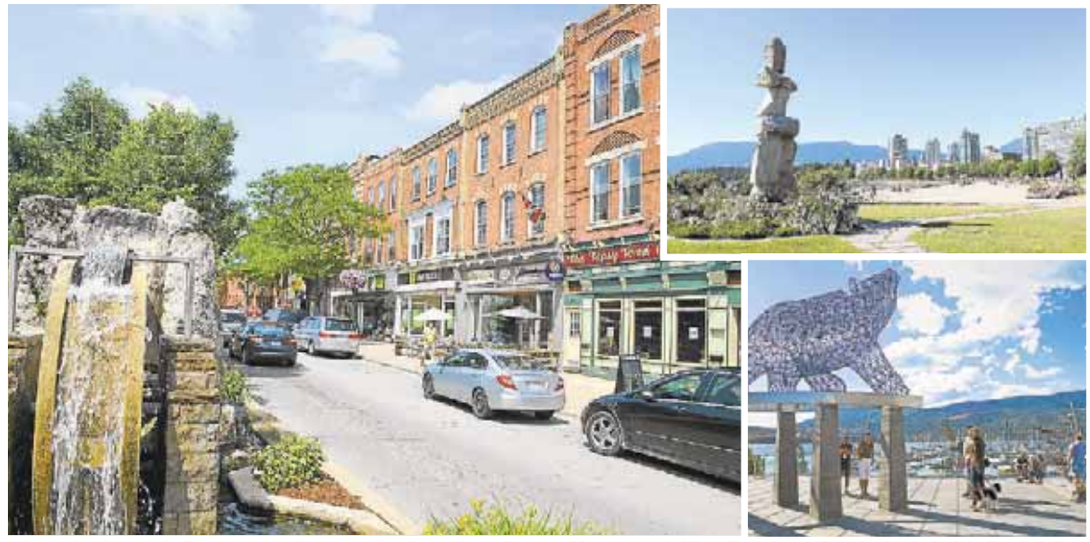
TEXT: AFP; ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Finding what's Great about Canada

ON THE MOVE

Orangeville, Ont., B.C. cities top planners' annual awards

Loren Christie
For Metro Canada



Clockwise from left, Broadway in Orangeville, Ont. (Great Street), Vancouver's West End, featuring the Inukshuk in English Bay (Great Neighbourhood), and Stuart Park in Kelowna, B.C. (Great Public Space). CONTRIBUTED

For the last five years, the Canadian Institute of Planners has hosted an annual contest called Great Places in Canada. The goal is to engage Canadians in sharing the places they love while highlighting the important work that is being done in building and rehabilitating our cities, towns and parks.

From great metropolises to tiny towns the 29 nominees provide a catalogue of travel destinations that are local treasures. The winners in the categories of Great Street, Great Neighbourhood and Great Public Space were revealed this past week.

Broadway in Orangeville, Ont., won the title of Great Street. "To be great, a street must be a destination in its own right. Broadway fits the bill as an inviting place at the heart of Orangeville," says Ben Petch, contest juror.

Other highlights are the institutional uses that anchor the street and give it purpose and a variety of restaurants, landscaping and patios, which enable people to enjoy the space. The historical buildings add character, and regular festivals and events ensure people experience the street.

Great Neighbourhood went to Vancouver's West End. The West End is easy, safe and inviting; residents walk and bike to work and can easily explore Vancouver's beaches, trails and the incredible Stanley Park.

"Transit access, traffic calming, street furniture, treed promenades, pocket parks and public spaces reflect a thoughtful approach to placemaking," says juror Jaspal Marwah. "Home to the city's LGBTQ community, the West End's density is evenly matched by its diversity of residents, and by a strong commitment to creating an inclusive community that prioritizes affordable housing."

Stuart Park in Kelowna, B.C., was awarded Great Public Space. According to juror Kevin King, "Stuart Park bridges the re-emergence of Kelowna's downtown within the incredible natural setting of the Okanagan Valley. Energized by a civic plaza, the park comes alive at all seasons. Summer performances on the plaza are memorable, while free winter-time ice-skating under the clear Okanagan skies invites people in the winter months."

Recent enhancements to Stuart Park have made it a year-round destination. Its unique reflection of local character and natural environment and accessibility for multi-generational activities make it a great destination for travellers to the area.

Runners-up for Great Street, Great Neighbourhood and Great Public Space were Main Street in Wolfville, N.S., Quartier Petit Champlain in Quebec City, Que., and Lethbridge River Valley in Lethbridge, Alta.

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May your budget be friendly

Todd Lewys

Christmas: there's no other time of year like it.

For some, it is the most wonderful time of the year. But for many, it's the most financially stressful time of the year due to a tendency to overspend on Christmas gifts for — literally — everyone lining the family tree and mingling in the social circle. As the 2014 BMO Holiday Spending Outlook report showed, the average Canadian planned to spend more than $1,500 on the holidays, with $551 of that on gifts alone. History also shows that Christmas 'tis the season of debt: 28 per cent of the survey's respondents took on an average of $963 in holiday debt.

Here are some tips on how to keep your spending under control during the holiday season:

1 Make a list

Determine exactly who you'll be giving to. You can't give to everyone, so think of family and friends first, and maybe leave co-workers or acquaintances off the list – or just give them a gift that costs under $10.

2 Set a budget

This is where you have to be realistic. If you're a student, living on a limited income or simply aren't rich, budget accordingly. If that budget comes out to $250 or $500, buy gifts for those most important to you within the financial parameters you've set out.

3 Avoid impulse buys

No question, impulse purchases can be hard to resist. This is where discipline comes in. Know what you want to purchase for each recipient on your list, and then stay within your budget, which might entail spending $500 for 10 people, an average of $50 per person. If giving to a family, perhaps buy them one gift rather than several to stay within your spending limit.

4 Get Googling

Try Googling "promo code ___" before taking your online cart through the checkout and you can often save a huge amount off of the original price or at the very least snag free shipping," says Kyle Prevost, co-author of the blog youngandthrifty.ca.

5 Do it yourself

If you're good at knitting, painting or photography, put those talents to use at Christmastime. Knit your nephew a cool toque, paint a serene lake scene for your aunt or frame a great wildlife photo you snapped that your best friend can hang in his den. Such gifts don't cost much to produce (time being your major investment), and people will appreciate the thought and effort that went into the gift.

6 Consider a gift card

This is a strategy that can pay off on two fronts. First, buying gift cards in $25 or $50 denominations makes it easier to stay within a defined budget. Second, it will allow the recipient to put the money toward an item that they truly want, rather than having to take the time to return argyle socks or a cheesy tie to recoup the cash.

7 Give Yourself

Think homemade gift cards giving your time in the form of free babysitting, cooking a meal or weeding the garden. "If the job market hasn't been especially kind to you lately and you are blessed with more time than money, providing a much needed helping hand can be one of the most thoughtful and treasured gifts you can give," notes Prevost.

8 Team up

That way you could collectively spring for larger items that wouldn't normally fit in your budget, says Anne Keery, the blogger behind unique-gifter.com. You get to spend less, but gift big.

9 It's not the amount spent, but the thought that counts

Reality is, a gift doesn't have to be lavish to be appreciated. Put in the time and thought, and mom will appreciate a beautiful acrylic sweater just as much as she would an expensive cashmere pullover.

Heed these tips, and you'll be able to give great Christmas gifts to those dearest to you without going into deep debt.

WITH FILES FROM ASTRID VAN DEN BROEK

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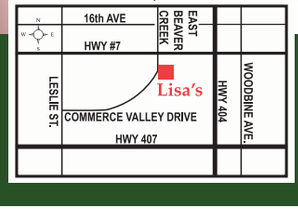

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November 2015

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December 2015

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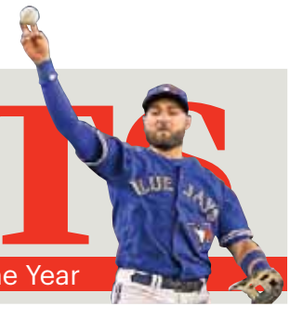


Blue Jays' Kevin Pillar, who finished second for the Gold Glove, was named the Wilson Defensive Player of the Year

Letourneau on Rousey card

UFC

Quebecer eyes big chance amid Rousey-mania Down Under

After carving open Jessica Penne's face in June, UFC strawweight champion Joanna Jedrzejczyk climbed the Octagon fence, looked at the camera and asked "Who's next?"

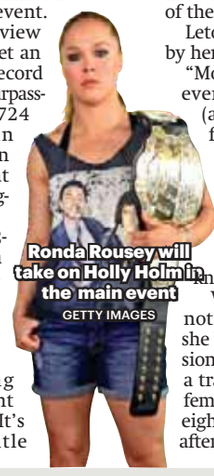
Canadian Valerie (Trouble) Letourneau answered the call.

On Saturday, the 115-pounder from Montreal enters the cage a 20-1 underdog against the hard-hitting Polish title-holder in the co-main event of UFC 193 in Melbourne, Australia.

(Rowdy) Ronda Rousey defends her bantamweight (135-pound) crown against former champion boxer Holly Holm in the Etihad Stadium main event.

The pay-per-view show could set an attendance record for the UFC, surpassing the 55,724 who took in UFC 129 in April 2011 at Toronto's Rogers Centre.

Rousey (12-0) is also a 20-1 favourite to dispatch Holm (9-0), who is ranked seventh among bantamweight contenders. It's the sixth title defence for Rousey, a former Olympic judo bronze medallist who has become the face of the UFC.



Ronda Rousey will take on Holly Holm in the main event

GETTY IMAGES

Letourneau (8-3) is unfazed by her heavy underdog status.

"Most of the people won't even know who I am and (also) haven't seen my fights," she said. "I always feel like the public doesn't see fights like the fighters look at it.

"I'm not so surprised but I feel like I have the respect of Joanna. She knows what I'm capable of."

While Letourneau may not be a household name, she has been fighting professionally since 2007 and was a trailblazer among Quebec female fighters. She is ranked eighth among strawweights after winning all three of her previous UFC bouts.

> **"Finally the hard work is paying off."**
> Valerie Letourneau on getting her title shot

"Finally the hard work paid off," she said after getting the title bid.

Some might say be careful what you wish for when it comes to fighting Jedrzejczyk, a former Muay Thai champion with world-class striking. After less than three rounds with the champion, a bloody Penne looked like someone had taken a box-cutter to her face.

Jedrzejczyk (10-0) registered 126 significant strikes to Penne's 25. When she dethroned inaugural champion Carla Esparza at UFC 185 in March, she held a 53-4 edge.

The predatory Polish fighter also stuffed 27 of 28 takedown attempts in those two fights.

Still the 32-year-old Letourneau says her preparations have been ideal and that she feels no more pressure than any other fight. Letourneau is coming off an upset decision win over Maryna (Iron Lady) Moroz in August in Saskatoon.

The Australian stadium show originally was to have featured welterweight champion (Ruthless) Robbie Lawler and Carlos (The Natural Born Killer) Condit. The UFC shifted Rousey-Holm to the main event when Lawler was injured. The Melbourne card actually takes place Sunday in Australia but will air live Saturday night in North America.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB IN BRIEF

Mariners acquire reliever Benoit from San Diego for two minor leaguers

Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto is wasting little time in addressing one of his team's most glaring needs.

Seattle added options to its bullpen Thursday, acquiring 38-year-old right-hander Joaquin Benoit from the San Diego Padres for two minor league prospects — right-handed pitcher Enyel De Los Santos and infielder Nelson Ward. Dipoto saw Benoit pitch live in September. He raved about his change-up and was impressed with his ability to still throw in the mid-90s by season's end. Benoit was 6-5 with a 2.34 ERA in 67 appearances last season for San Diego. Opponents hit just .159 against Benoit.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Donaldson caps season with Silver Slugger award

Josh Donaldson's super season for the Toronto Blue Jays has landed him a Silver Slugger award, Major League Baseball has announced. One award was announced Thursday for the best offensive performer at each position in each of the two leagues.

Donaldson, who led the Jays with 41 home runs and the American League with 122 runs and 123 RBIs, won the AL's award for third base.

METRO

Josh Donaldson

GETTY IMAGES

NHL LEAFS HOPING TO BUILD ON WIN OVER DALLAS
Toronto Maple Leafs center Leo Komarov, left, battles Nashville Predators forward Mike Fisher for the puck in the first period on Thursday. For the result of this game, go to metronews.ca. MARK HUMPHREY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WADA DOPING REPORT

Russia rules out Olympic boycott

With an Olympic boycott ruled out, Russia is planning to at least partially admit it has a doping problem. Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said on Thursday that there will "not in any case" be a boycott of next year's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

A short time later in a separate interview, the acting president of the Russian track federation told the AP he is ready to own up to some of the charges levelled in the World Anti-Doping Agency commission's massive report on doping in the country. "We admit some things, we argue with some things," said Vadim Zelichenok, declining to provide further details.

The governing body of track and field is expected to rule Friday on whether to suspend Russia from competition because of the doping scandal. If Russia is banned, the country's track and field team could be excluded from next year's Olympics.

Monday's damning report by the WADA commission recommended that the Russian track federation be suspended, saying its athletes and officials were involved in "extensive" use of performance-enhancing drugs, obstructed doping tests and helped to cover up drug use.

Even if Russia's track and field team is banned, Mutko told the AP that the country has no intention of boycotting the Olympics.

"Russia is against a boycott. Russia is against political interference in sport," Mutko said.

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Moving on from an 8-1 nightmare

WORLD CUP QUALIFYING

Canucks seek revenge over Honduras for rout of 2012

More than three years on, the stench of the loss still lingers.

The Canadian men's soccer team travelled to Honduras in October 2012 needing only a draw to make the final round of qualifying for the World Cup in Brazil, but instead suffered an 8-1 beating that crushed their hopes of making the tournament for the first time since the country's only appearance in 1986.

"It's something that I know a lot of us have been thinking about," midfielder Atiba Hutchinson said this week. "It hurt."

Canada has an opportunity to avenge that defeat when it opens the penultimate CONCACAF qualifying round for the 2018 World Cup against Honduras on Friday, the first match between the nations since the horror show in San Pedro Sula.

"It's a new team, a different situation," said midfielder Julian de Guzman, who was also on the field for the Honduran debacle. "It's also another way of forgetting that result."

But while the stunning rout got most of the attention, what really sealed Canada's fate at this stage last time around were dropped points at home in a 0-0 tie with Honduras in Toronto. Had the Canadians won that game, the outcome four months later at Estadio Olimpico Metropolitan would have been meaningless. It's a lesson the players learned the hard way.

"Home games are very crucial for us," said de Guzman. "The last World Cup cycle, that's what killed us." Will Johnson added that although winning in Vancouver ahead of a road game against El Salvador on Tuesday is vital, Canada is more capable of getting road results under head coach Benito Floro.

"You want to get the points in the bag as early as possible," said the midfielder. "History says (Friday) is a 'must-win' compared to how Canadian teams have done, but we've also started to turn the corner and feel confident competing on the road."

A renewed attack that includes David (Junior) Hoilett and Major League Soccer rookie of the year Cyle Larin will hope to help bring much-needed goals to the shot-shy team.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

EURO PLAYOFF

Hungary grabs a slender advantage in first leg

Hungary's grief-stricken players put former goalkeeper Martin Fulop's death to one side to claim a 1-0 win over Norway Thursday in the first leg of their Euro 2018 playoff. Laszlo Kleinheisler scored the game's only goal. METRO

Honduran **Jerry Bengtson**, left, celebrates after scoring against Canada in the 8-1 rout in 2012. ORLANDO SIERRA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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RECIPE
Avocado Egg Salad Sandwich

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

The addition of avocado is a creamy and nutritious twist on your usual egg salad.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Makes: 2 or 3 sandwiches, depending how big you like your sandwiches.

Ingredients
- 3 hard boiled eggs
- 2 avocados, pitted
- 1 Tbsp Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp chives, chopped fine
- 1/4 tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 to 6 slices whole grain bread

Directions
1. Egg boiling trick: place eggs in cold water and put pot over medium high heat. Bring the water to a boil, place a lid on pot, take off the heat and set your timer to 12 minutes.
2. Rinse the eggs under cold water to cool them down enough to peel. Remove the shells. Roughly chop the boiled eggs.
3. In a large bowl, mash your ripe avocados, breaking them down into chunks. Add the chopped eggs, lemon juice, chives, Dijon and give it all a good mix. Salt and pepper to taste.
4. Spread your mixture on sandwich bread and add anything else you like — tomatoes, lettuce, sliced cucumber.

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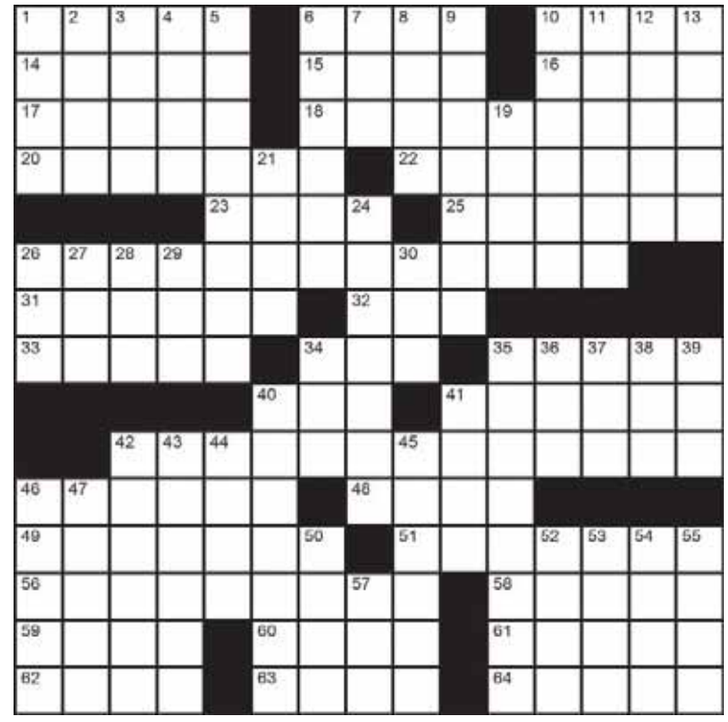
CROSSWORD
Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Flavouring in Greek aperitif Ouzo
6. Shake off
10. Flippant
14. Jesters
15. Auth. unknown
16. Cheese variety
17. House's loft area
18. Where there is a tradition in Ontario of having a motorcycle rally: 2 wds. (More at #42-Across!)
20. Adjust again
22. Ancient three-levels-of-oars Mediterranean ship
23. Winnie-the-Who?
25. Admission
26. Finely-fitted or furnished
31. Bypasses
32. Word: French
33. "Beau _" (1939) starring Gary Cooper
34. Big load, variantly
35. Ada's love in "Cold Mountain" (2003)
40. Grass appendage
41. Paradise
42. #18-Across' biker event takes place each _ _ _ (Superstition!)
46. Nike logo
48. Shakespeare... The Tragedy of Othello, the _ of Venice
49. Collaborator
51. Not deep
56. Big bird of the sea
58. Greyish-brown
59. "SCTV" bit
60. Duellist's need
61. Acclamation
62. Built
63. Meadow's morning moisturizers
64. Some computers

DOWN
1. Way off in the distance, posh-style
2. Memo
3. 9th Greek alphabet letter
4. Dropped in standings
5. Fun adventure
6. Electronics store purchase
7. Religious song: "Lead _, _ King Eternal"
8. Variety
9. Signed-up competitor
10. Sensation felt skyrocketing in space
11. Made the riverbanks resistant to rising waters
12. Articles
13. Unmasks
19. Word meanings reference book, briefly
21. Bursts the balloons
24. Same-sounding word as another word, but with a different meaning (Two vs. Too)
26. Fido's flick of the tail
27. Nightfall
28. _ Angeles
29. Candle with a flame status
30. 'Opt' suffix
34. Former plane letters
35. Emphasized an important point
36. Place atop the Billboard chart, _. _
37. Music file format
38. Small island
39. Thumbs-down utterance
40. Stuck to the rules
41. "Here comes trouble!"
42. Prohibit
43. Go around
44. "_ It Romantic" by Ella Fitzgerald
45. Shuffles the garden salad
46. Muscle cramp
47. _-_-thon (Fund-raising event)
50. Anchor's attachment
52. Needlework creation
53. Period of calmness
54. Iridescent gem
55. Soaks
57. Hem pants, for instance

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS
by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
You are hugely ambitious and you don't mind when the pressure is on — in fact you thrive on it. What happens next will give you the opportunity to prove yourself. Be amazing.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
No matter how many times you've failed in the past you'll make up for it simply because you believe in yourself and refuse to give up. Your staying power is legendary and guarantees success.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You have been too cautious of late but as from today you will go to the other extreme and take risks left, right and centre. Whether or not you are right to do so remains to be seen.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You have been generous lately, both with your time and money, but now you have to put your own needs first. The planets warn that you must not give to others what you need for yourself.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
If you have fallen behind in your workload you must make an effort to catch up or revise your schedule so that you are not under so much pressure. Are the deadlines necessary?

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
If your efforts are yielding ever smaller results it is a sure sign you have pushed yourself too hard and need to slow down. Strike a balance between your work and your wellbeing.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Your self-belief may have taken a hammering but soon you will be back to your best. However, don't start believing that nothing can go wrong. Over-confidence could lead to disaster.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You are more sensitive than people imagine and what happens today will affect you deeply. Put on a brave face and make it appear as if you are in full control but open up to someone you trust as well.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may not have been your usual sunny self but today's link between Mercury, planet of the mind, and Jupiter, your ruler, will inspire you.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Spend less time thinking about what might go wrong and more time enjoying what's going right. Something will happen to make sure you realize just how lucky you are.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You have put up with a lot recently and although there were times you almost gave up you kept on battling. Soon you will get your reward.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
You will come to the aid of someone in need today and it will do you both a lot of good. Selfless actions always come back to the person who makes them and some day someone will help you when you most need assistance.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

6			3		2			4
	9	8		6		5	1	
8								9
		5				7		
9								5
	3	1		9		4	5	
2			6		7			3

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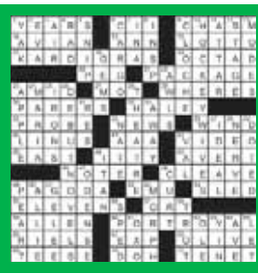
YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers.

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games



8	3	5	6	4	9	2	1	7
6	7	1	3	2	5	8	4	9
2	4	9	7	1	8	3	6	5
5	1	7	4	3	6	9	8	2
3	6	8	5	9	2	1	7	4
9	2	4	8	7	1	6	5	3
1	5	2	9	8	4	7	3	6
7	9	6	1	5	3	4	2	8
4	8	3	2	6	7	5	9	1

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metro

PREVIEW OPENING TOMORROW AT 12PM

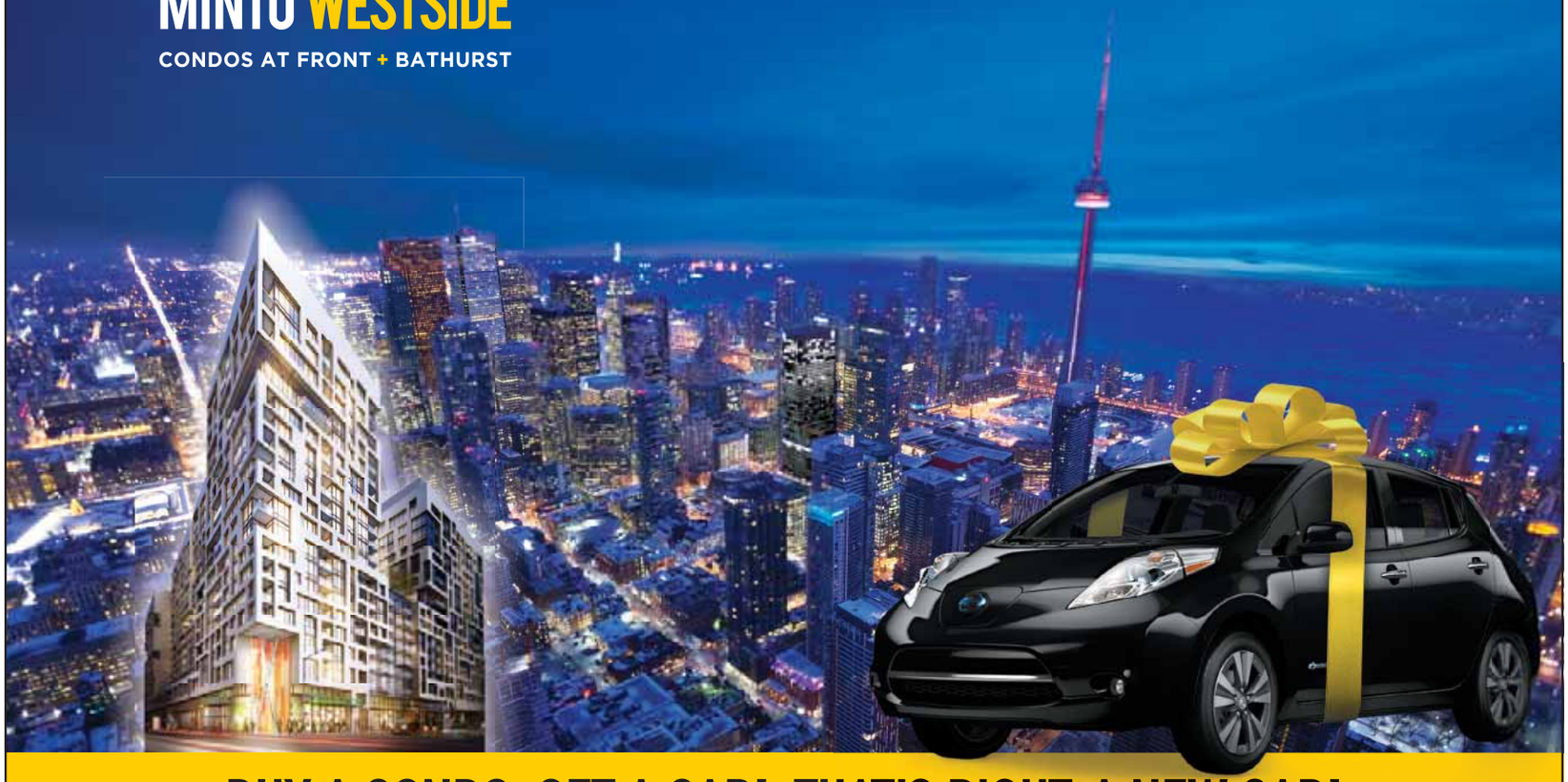
BSIDE

MINTO WESTSIDE

CONDOS AT FRONT + BATHURST

LIVE BSIDE IT ALL!
FROM THE LOW $200's*

PRESENTATION CENTRE
25 BATHURST STREET



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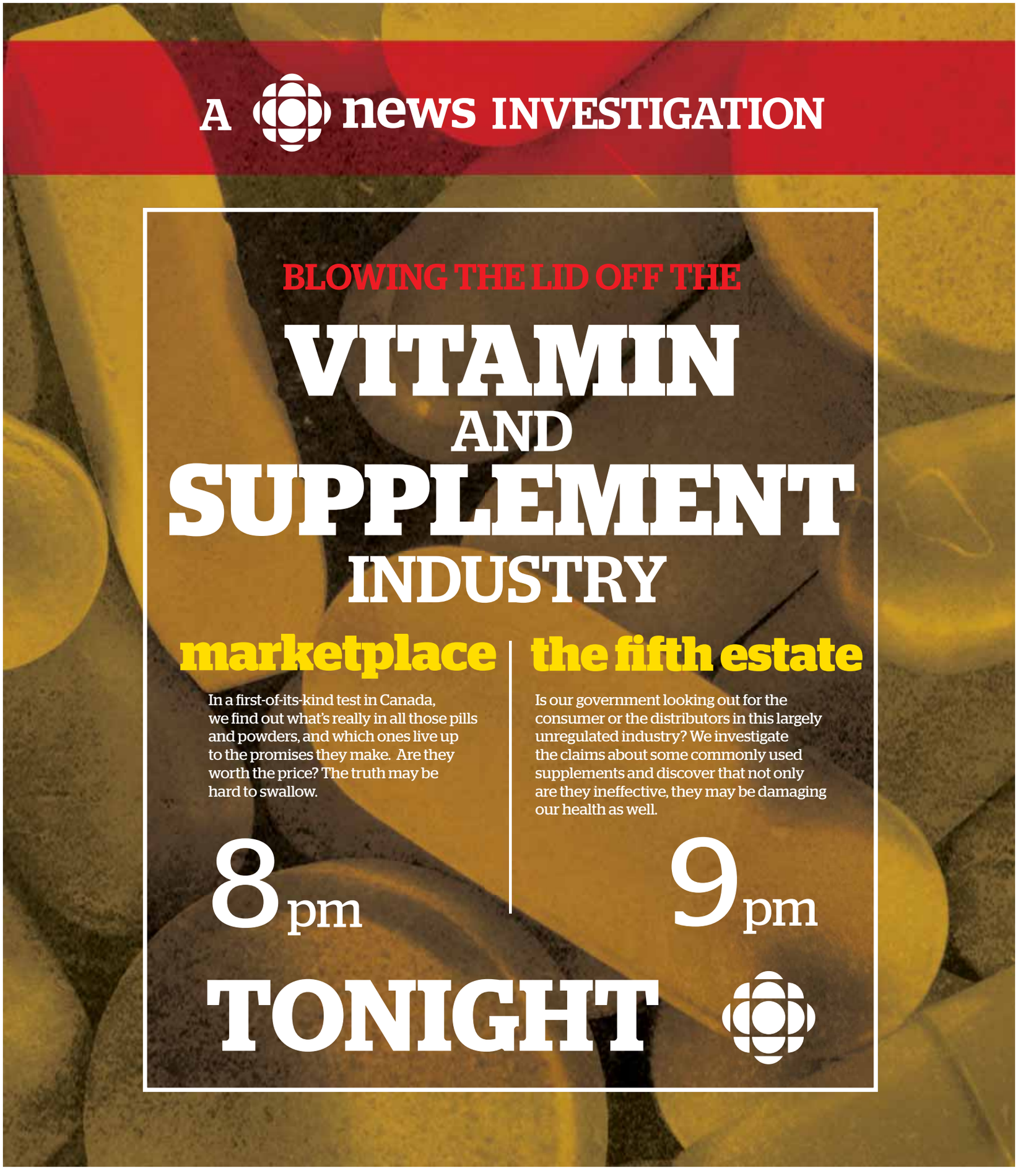
A news INVESTIGATION
BLOWING THE LID OFF THE
VITAMIN
AND
SUPPLEMENT
INDUSTRY
marketplace
In a first-of-its-kind test in Canada, we find out what's really in all those pills and powders, and which ones live up to the promises they make. Are they worth the price? The truth may be hard to swallow.
8 pm
the fifth estate
Is our government looking out for the consumer or the distributors in this largely unregulated industry? We investigate the claims about some commonly used supplements and discover that not only are they ineffective, they may be damaging our health as well.
9 pm
TONIGHT